Serious Conſiderations on the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, in creating and preſerving Multitudes of different Beings, amidſt thoſe terrible Evils, which we on every Hand are encompaſſed with, and muſt unavoidably have fallen into, had not that kind Providence interpoſed which pervades this mighty Fabric, and univerſally upholds and ſuccours every Individual.

THESE

MEDITATIONS

Not only diſcover GOD's Unwillingneſs to puniſh the Refractory, till they are become irreclaimable, and without any ſigns of Repentance; but alſo obviouſly manifeſt, that nothing can ſatisfy the Soul of Man, or by any Means be agreeable to it, but what is of its own Spiritual Nature, and of its own everlaſting Duration.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED SOME

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

STATE OF DEPARTED SOULS,

AND THAT

Interval betwixt DEATH and the RESURRECTION,

Extracted from the Works of that eminently pious and learned Divine, Dr. JOHN JORTIN;

But alſo ſelect FORMS of PRAYER, extracted from the Liturgy of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, and other Books of Devotion, ſuitable to theſe Meditations, and the ſeveral Parts of this Diſcourſe.

By the Rev. Mr. SMITH,

Reader at the ROLLS CHAPEL, and Preacher of the SUNDAY MORNING and THURSDAY AFTERNOON LECTURES, in the Pariſh Church of ST. GILES, CRIPPLEGATE.

Theſe Lectures are both ſupported by the Worſhipful Company of HABERDASHERS.

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MEDITATIONS, &c.

THE unbounded Author of the univerſe, and uncreated ſource of infinite beneficence, formed numerous tribes of different annimals, with power ſuited to their different natures, from the loweſt reptile to the higheſt ſeraph, was too well ſatisfied in himſelf, in the contemplation of his own excellencies, to want any external praiſes, to make his glory more conſpicuous, or his happineſs more complete. His original felicity is as incapable of acceſſion, as it is of diminution. God's majeſty is not increaſed by the hallelujahs of angels, nor his tranſcendent greatneſs, by the ſublimeſt adoration and obedience of men: But this diſintereſted friend to mankind, and to all the human ſpecies, who ſtocked the earth with beautiful plants, and vegitables of every kind, and watered them with the dews of heaven, enjoyed himſelf in that eternal duration which he had before they were called from the barren and unfruitful womb of nothing; nay it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe, that even the moſt exalted beings, who have nothing but what they receive, and God is voluntarily pleaſed to beſtow, and continually ſupply them with, can make him more illuſtrious, whoſe generoſity and benignity is plentifully diffuſed throughout the ſeveral and moſt diſtant parts of the earth: It is obvious then to contemplative minds, that the main intention of the Deity, by forming intelli-

gent creatures in his own likeneſs, and communicating to them life and happineſs, and every other neceſſary bleſſing, was not to enrich his own nature, but to embelliſh and adorn theirs. Their maker endowed them with ſuch knowledge and wiſdom, had it been properly uſed, and rightly applied, as would have armed them againſt ſatan's devices, and the artful inſinuations of that and every other ſubtle and malicious enemy. Their eyes being opened, and their underſtandings enlightened, the ſtupendous fabric of heaven preſented itſelf to our firſt parents, with all the radiant hoſt above, ſhining in their utmoſt ſplendour, with all the marks of that power and infinite wiſdom which contrived and executed this admirable and aſtoniſhing ſyſtem. They were not blinded with animal delight, nor the dazzling luſtre of empty grandeur, which too often ſeize our minds, and indiſpoſe us for divine and ſpiritual meditations, and for muſing on the works of God; but they, by an eaſy aſcent, diſcovered the glory of his eſſence, and ſaw the beauty of their Creator through the tranſparent veil of the creature. This happy pair, by obſerving the order of the creation, and the variety and ſtability of its parts, and the ſurpriſing ſkilfulneſs of this mighty Architect, who diſpoſed and ſuſtained the whole, were raviſhed with inconceivable delight, and filled with intire ſatisfaction. In order to continue them in this happy ſtate, and under the watchful eye of his care, the diligent obſerver of the human race, made proviſion agreeable to their rational natures, to maintain them in that rank of beings in which they were originally placed by the all

wiſe

wiſe and good providence of that God, who makes nothing in vain. For which purpoſe, reaſon was to be their ruler and guide; love, the moſt noble and maſterly affection, and that which gives vivacity and activity to all the reſt, and puts all the ſprings and faculties of the ſoul in motion. This holy incenſe was offered up to God, the one ſelf-exiſtent, unoriginated and independent Deity, and Adam and Eve obeyed the firſt and chief command of loving God with all their hearts, and with all their ſouls, and with all their ſtrength. The divine and moral excellencies of God were ſo amiable and admirable, ſo lovely and delightful to them, that they begat in their untainted minds, a filial holy fear, and an awful reverence of thoſe perfections, which increaſed and ſecured their peace and happineſs, but brought terrour to the guilty, and horror to an evil conſcience. Their thoughts were ſo calm and ſerene, that no tormenting fears, or vain hopes could ſeduce or miſlead their undeſigning and upright hearts, which were the ſeats of innocency, and the habitations of delight: Their love to God was perfect, without any painful ſenſations, or the leaſt uneaſy ſymptoms of grief, which would have preyed upon their ſpirits, and eradicated all thoſe refined amuſements which were adapted to their primitive ſimplicity, and the delights of that bleſſed ſtate, in which they were ſituated by infinite Goodneſs, and were intended to dwell for ever. Thus happy were our original progenitors, who had nothing to perplex them within, nor any malavolence to ſuſpect from without, whilſt they obſerved thoſe animating precepts, which the

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God of nature had ingrafted in them, and formed with moſt powerful motives, to unite them in cloſe friendſhip and intimate communion with him, whoſe dominion reaches from ſea to ſea, and who only can defend and preſerve all things in heaven and in earth. They had all their faculties bright and active, fit for obſervation and reflection, and to diſcover the moſt enſnaring promiſes, and detect the faireſt pretenſions of Satan, and all his emiſſaries of darkneſs and his injurious ſchemes of deceit; ſo that whatever figure he might appear in, or plauſible ſpeeches or inducements uſe, to diſguiſe his fallacies, they might have been unravelled, and his enſnaring ſuggeſtions defeated: For had our firſt parents attended to their reaſon, and obſerved the voice of their intelligent monitor, the enemy might have been repulſed, and they might have triumphed in the conqueſt. And though man was complete in his own order, and enjoyed nature in its primitive ſimplicity, without any of thoſe mortal diſeaſes and foul blemiſhes, which are the traces and footſteps of ſin, to ſully his beauty or to ſhake his integrity; yet he was in a ſtate of mutability, and under a poſſibility of falling, and of being eternally ruined. But notwithſtanding he was ſubject to change, and receptive of evil ſuggeſtions and bad impreſſions, Adam, before his revolt, or the union was broke betwixt God and him, had power to reſiſt the ſtrongeſt temptations, to preſerve the beauty of holineſs undefiled, and the ſacred principles of virtue unſtained and untouched. The deceiver could only urge or allure, but could neither force nor compel him

to

to do what God had forbid him, and neglect what God had required or abſolutely commanded. It is inconſiſtent with infinite purity, by any impulſive cauſe, to drive the creature into ſin, or induce him to commit iniquity, or infuſe ſuch diſpoſitions into his heart, as will unavoidably prompt him to rebel, and to wage war with his Maker who delights in peace, and abhors cruelty and diſtraction. As God cannot be tempted with evil, ſo neither tempteth he any man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. To affirm God neceſſitates his creatures to ſin, would be an argument of ſuch inſincerity, and the want of candour, as can hardly be conceived to fall within the compaſs of that upright being, who is ſtiled a God of truth and of unchangeable righteouſneſs: Nay, it would be ſuch reproach to the Divinity as cannot be ſuffered to remain without ignominy, nor to be reconciled with that affection which God in the moſt ſolemn manner profeſſes for his people, in that revelation which he has publiſhed for the univerſal benefit of all generations, that men might learn from its extenſive and heavenly light, not to tax him with their follies and horrid blaſphemies, but to cenſure and condemn themſelves: For if men wilfully or deſignedly miſtake the object, the fault is wholly in them, and owing to their perverſeneſs, and not to any deficiency in God, who hath endowed them with reaſon to diſcern, and free agency to chooſe and act according to that intelligent and inſtructive principle: And therefore, we cannot poſſibly aſſert, or maintain, without arraigning the divine conduct, and impeach-

ing the divine attributes, and all God's moral perfections, and that he neither with-holds or with-draws that power from men, which is neceſſary to make them happy, and to prevent their otherwiſe ruin and deſtruction. It is injurious to God's wiſdom, and diſhonourable to his goodneſs, totally to deface that noble work, which he pronounced very good, and compoſed with ſo much deſign, and finiſhed with ſuch accuracy, that it even aſtoniſhes men and angels, and every part of the rational world: Hence it follows that men are in a ſtate of dependency, and capable of learning and obſerving a law which was compiled to inſtruct and guide them, and ſtored with precepts to rule and govern them.

The inferior animals glorify their Benefactor, as in them there is an apparent or viſible demonſtration of his attributes; but men are only qualified to know and love their creator, as the benefit of all redounds to them; ſo their duty is to pay tribute for all. By the mouth of man, the world makes its confeſſion to God, and proclaims the amazing generoſity of him, to whom we are indebted for all that great abundance of temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings which we are enriched with, and enjoy in the greateſt affluence: For man is not only the interpreter of the ſilent, and all the inanimate parts of nature, but he alſo declares thoſe uninterrupted praiſes, which the full choir of heaven render to their maker, who deſerves all that piercing language which penetrates the clouds, and reaches the celeſtial throne: All thy works praiſe thee, and thy ſaints give thanks unto thee; thanks are due from all rational and intelligent beings to

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their ſovereign Lord and inconceivable, wiſe and compaſſionate Ruler, the Author of all our powers and faculties, and the ſole ſupport of our lives, and the diſpoſer of all our concerns: Upon this account, man, who believes that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him; that he can make him as great and as happy as he pleaſes, is under a double obligation to obedience, and to obſerve his unalterable laws. In fine, the image of God in man is a living, powerful principle, and bears the ſame relation to the ſoul as the ſoul doth to the body, to awe and animate all its faculties, in their ſeveral offices and different operations, according to the divine direction. So great was God's love to man, in making him the object of his care, and placing him under his eye and immediate inſpection, that when the Pſalmiſt looked up to heaven and ſaw the majeſty of God, wrote in the legible characters of light, he was ſtruck with the profoundeſt admiration and ectacies of divine wonder: And though his faculties are impared, and his underſtanding biaſſed by unnatural luſts, and darkened by evil propenſities, yet he breaks out into amazement and into raptures of joy, Lord, what is man, that thou art ſo mindful of him, or the ſon of man that thou ſo regardeſt him? That thou who madeſt him little lower than the angels to crown him with glory and honour? Thou, who art great beyond imagination, and independent of all thy creatures, ſhould favour man with thy providential regard, which is ſo viſible in his care and preſervation, that it cannot paſs unobſerved, without the moſt affected blindneſs, when it viſits him

him every morning, and renews its mercies every evening. He, on ruminating on theſe things, and on all thoſe ſtupendous and undeſerved bleſſings, exults in holy tranſports of joy, and pious grateful praiſes: O Lord our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the World? How manifold are thy works, in wiſdom haſt thou made them all. If the Pſalmiſt ſaw ſuch beauty and propriety after nature was corrupted, it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, but highly probable, that our firſt parents underſtood thoſe laws which the God of nature linked together; ſuch myriads of different beings, ſo diſtant from and oppoſite to each other, to keep them within due bounds, and from devouring one another. The diſcovery of which leave little room to doubt but it conſtrained them to cry out, Great is the Lord, and great is his power, his wiſdom is infinite, and his ways are unſearchable and paſt finding out. Had they regarded God's prohibition, and the ſuperlative marks of his goodneſs, they, inſtead of liſtening to the deceiver, would have treated his promiſes with ſcorn and the utmoſt deriſion, and never have brought on themſelves thoſe miſeries which are the certain and fatal iſſues of ſin, and the direful effects of diſobedience. For by voluntarily renouncing their allegiance, and paying greater attention to the ſeducer than to the poſitive command of their Creator, they were expelled the garden of God, and wholly baniſhed from that happy abode, that delightful habitation of peace, and ſerene manſion of pure love. Adam and his help-mate being driven from this pleaſant ſituation, and the pleaſures of this agreeable incloſure were

filled

filled with frightful ideas, which crowded thick into their minds, when oppreſſed with the terrors of guilt, and the bitter remembrances of conſcience, which terrifies by day, and torments them by night. They who once were unapprehenſive of danger, and dwelt in perfect ſecurity, are, from their own conſciouſneſs, afraid of repeated attacks from that envious foe and triumphant enemy, who, by his ſerpentine wiles had betrayed them, and left them to the juſtice of God, who is a conſuming fire, when that terrible attribute is ſeparated from thoſe mild and forbearing attributes of mercy and beneficence. Their internal tranquillity was no ſooner broke, and their primitive luſtre ſpoiled, but they who uſed to be enlivened and animated by the divine appearance, now tremble at the voice of God, and look upon him as an angry Deity, and armed with vengeance againſt them: The conſtant dread of which ſo weakened the bright beams of light, and cauſed ſuch diſtraction in their minds, and terrible emotions in them, as Paradiſe, with all its refreſhing verdure, and all its pleaſant views and ſhady bowers, could neither remove thoſe feuds, nor abate their ſorrowful apprehenſions. The painful ſmart of that ſting raged ſo violently in their breaſts, that it blinded their nobleſt faculties, and made them fooliſhly and ſtupidly ſuppoſe they could hide themſelves and their diſobedience from God, whoſe eyes for brightneſs are as a flame of fire, and penetrate the loweſt receſſes and cloſeſt folds of the heart. Thus expoſed to God's wrathful indignation, Eden, the garden of innocent delight, and the ſacred ſprings of endleſs bliſs, loſes all its delicious ſcent, and all its green meadows, which were once ſo pleaſing to

the ſight, are turned into dull and gloomy ſhades. So fearfully diſtreſſed were our progenitors, the parents of all the families of the earth, by wanting to be wiſer and greater than God thought fit to make them, that they wandered about like exiles, in ſome remote uninhabited iſland, and can find nothing to revive or raiſe their drooping ſpirits, in this melancholy and tragical ſituation. The God whom they had provoked, and who only could render their condition tolerable, or in any degree comfortable, was ſo irritated by their diſloyalty, that they dared not invoke him for mercy, nor apply to his awful Majeſty to heal that deadly wound, with the ſalutary medicine and ſovereign remedy of his grace. It is hardly poſſible to be denied; but Adam and Eve owed their fatal lapſe, no leſs to their intemperate curioſity, and an immoderate deſire of knowledge, than to the virulence of the ſerpent, who by promiſing what he was unable to perform, or could ever make good, extinguiſhed the glorious light within, and covered their minds with thick darkneſs, the very emblem of death and of unſpeakable horror. But notwithſtanding their grievous miſery, and the diſturbance occaſioned by diſobedient appetites, they, inſtead of humbling themſelves before God, and heartily bemoaning the wretchedneſs of their ſtate, endeavour to palliate their offences, by making frivolous excuſes, and mutually laying the blame on each other. They who were as noble vines, and voluntarily ſet by the Lord of Hoſts, are now turned into degenerate plants, and have ſo horridly corrupted their hearts, that the good ſeed ſown in them is almoſt ſtifled among the

weeds of iniquity, which produce the unkind fruits of bitterneſs, and the baneful roots of ſorrow. Thus their numerous progeny, by the force of an inquiſitive deſire, and inheriting their malevolent diſpoſitions, violently break through the laws of rectitude, and ſo oppoſe the cheering dictates of virtue, to follow their own vile abominations, that the earth is covered with violence, and all fleſh have corrupted their ways, and ſought out many inventions: For as ſoon as cities were built, and as faſt as people multiplied, vice and wickedneſs, impiety and intemperance ſo increaſed, that God is ſaid to repent, and that it grieved him at the heart that he ever made man, who thus inverted the ordinary courſe of things, and reproachfully violated and deſpiſed all the rules of moral government: And though men were admoniſhed of theſe practices, and the dreadful conſequences of ſuch proceedings by the Patriarchs before the flood, yet they gave no heed to thoſe warnings; but ſtill indulged their looſer appetites and profligate way of living, till the waters overwhelmed them, and all were deſtroyed, except eight perſons who were ſaved in the ark. This univerſal inundation and direful puniſhment was ſo little taken notice of, that no ſooner were the waters abated, and men recovered their former habitation, revelling and immorality ſoon gained ground, which ſpread like an overflowing torrent, and men ſeemed at all events determined to purſue their debauched, and infamous and licentious practices. The divine goodneſs being abuſed and ſhamefully perverted; the Almighty obſerving mens daring boldneſs, and that they would not be reclaimed, nor by

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any rational means, brought off from their wickedneſs, ſuffered them to follow their own luſts, and the inordinate cravings of animal paſſions, and to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs. Thus vile and corrupt were the Sodomites, whoſe manners were ſo impure, and ſo repugnant to original nature, that juſt Lot dwelling among them, hearing and ſeeing their filthy converſation, vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day, with their unnatural and unlawful deeds. Theſe enormous abuſes of infinite patience, and inſufferable and deteſtable cuſtoms, exaſperated Omnipotence to ſuch an high degree, as to ſend terrible lightenings; and ſhowers of liquid fire from heaven, to effect the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other cities of the Plane, with all their lewd and impure inhabitants. Theſe remarkable monuments of Divine juſtice on the antedeluvians by an univerſal flood on Sodom and Gomorrah, by an alarming and ſweeping conflagration, were not ſtretches of arbitrary power, without any reaſon to ſupport them, but arguments of God's wrath againſt ſin, and all the practitioners of uncleanneſs, and other brutiſh and flagrant provocations: All which memorable examples of God's vengeance, were not merely to exhibit his ſovereignty, or to magnify the authority of his laws, but for wiſe and good reaſons, to inforce obedience, to turn delinquents from their abominations, to the imitation of ſuch as God hath promiſed to defend and ſuccour in their exigencies and neceſſities, as he was before the fall, or the expulſion of Adam from Paradiſe; witneſs God's immediate appearance to, and frequent intercourſe with that people,

people, whom he by a long train of miracles, had often ſuſtained and comforted in their calamities, in which they were almoſt overwhelmed, and brought them with ſafety through this mighty whirl of things and ſurpriſing changes, in this our uncertain and unſettled abode. Theſe are undeniable inſtances of God's love and a deſire to increaſe compunction and genuine ſorrow of heart, the better to weaken the contagious power of ſin, and to deſtroy the venemous quality of it, and every dreadful moleſtation that might intercept our progreſs in virtue, and eſtabliſh us in religious principles. Were the divine wiſh unfeignedly anſwered, and an holy emulation improved, penitents would not be deluded by ſhadows, nor the ſoothing objects of ſenſe, but be more aſſiduous to pleaſe and adore that God, who has mercies in ſtore, and that in great abundance, laid up for ſuch as deteſt thoſe vices which endanger the welfare of their ſouls, and expoſe them to internal diſquietude, and the continual pain of diſtraction, and the fear of infinite diſpleaſure. Conſideration on the inconſtancy of our preſent ſtate, and the daily care that Providence takes of us unworthy creatures, are intended to open our underſtandings, and to win our affections, whoſe ſole property we are, and to whoſe liberality we are wholly indebted for our conſtant ſupport, and the ſupplies of his heavenly bounty. Were men deeply affected with thoſe moral and divine favours, they, from an inward principle of gratitude, would be conſtrained to rehearſe God's wonderous works, and extol his inceſſant care of his people, and that paternal regard which he diſcovered to them, and continual protection of them,

them, and the whole ſpecies of rational and active beings. Accordingly we find that the Deity is frequently figured in holy ſcripture under the character of a mild and gracious father, who kindly expoſtulates with his children, as the angel did with Balaam, not to run counter to the divine will, or to parley about God's equitable commands; but conſtantly, and without the leaſt heſitation, diſcard their own fooliſh conceits, and chearfully ſubmit to the divine pleaſure: The chief deſign of infinite forbearance, and God's waiting to be gracious, was to diſcover his innate ſweetneſs and benevolent inclinations, which are his eſſential properties, and moſt likely to touch and operate on the feelings of generous and ſenſible beings, when thoſe favours are clearly propoſed, and moſt affectionately opened to them: But theſe benign mercies with which God deſigned to endear his creatures to him, and to unite him and them in the holy bands of love, are employed in ſupporting malevolent exceſſes, in providing fuel for their luſt, to keep alive that libidinous flame, and to cheriſh that and every noxious and ignominious vice. This was not the caſe of ſuch only as were aliens to the common-wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers to the Covenant of Promiſe, but of thoſe alſo who were favoured with the ſymbols of God's glory, and an extraordinary revelation from heaven, they, inſtead of being thankful for that, and all other bleſſings, ſeemed as men fallen into a deep ſleep, and loſt in a dreadful ſtate of inſenſibility.

Theſe things will be conſidered in the next place, and it will be obviouſly proved, that the Iſraelites were guilty of as many vices, if not more, than others. The Hebrews are ſo deſcribed,

ſcribed by Iſaiah, as perſons *whoſe hearts are waxed groſs, whoſe ears are ſo dull of hearing, and whoſe eyes are ſo cloſed*, that no arguments could open them, nor any exhortations move them, or make this people more pliable, or leſs fond of their impieties. But notwithſtanding the Hebrews were ſo profane and vile in the ſight of God, this did not alter his divine and merciful purpoſe; but God, who is unchangeable in his eſſence, is alſo the ſame in his affection, and is vexed for their ſtupidity and inflexibility. For when he proclaimed his name among the Iſraelites, he did not do it in angry ſounds, but in the moving and pathetic language of kindneſs, and in the perſuaſive and ſoftening efficacy of love.

From thus muſing on the divine and moral excellencies and the purity of God's perfections, it is obvious to contemplative perſons, that one great end propoſed, was to awaken drowſy ſinners out of ſecurity, and make ſtupid creatures leave their egregious devices, and deſtructive ruinous exceſſes, which ſo diſgrace and diſtreſs human nature, and all our moral and intellectual capacities. For the conſtant and aſſiduous diſcharge of God's injunctions, and the ſacred rules of real piety, will ward off thoſe deadly chaſtiſements which the wicked are ſubject to, and muſt have fallen upon them, had not love ſkreened the criminals, and intercepted the ſtrokes of infinite vengeance. But tho' the rebellious were ſo perverſe and refractory, that they flew in the face of their Maker, he, in pity to their ſouls, and in compaſſion to their blindneſs, voluntarily exerted himſelf in their behalf, and engaged in their defence, and for their protection: For whenever his people were in miſery, or ſunk into the centre of ſorrow, he heard their cries in adverſity, and ſent them ſupplies and neceſſary

ſuccours from above: Still the Iſraelites forgot God was their Saviour, who, from the boundleſs ſtreams of overflowing beneficence, received and comforted them in their deſpondency, and in the dreary and tragical hours of perplexity. God, who is good beyond our conceptions, ſo commiſerated the diſtreſſes of his choſen, that when no arm could help them, nor be of any ſervice to them, he employed that power in their deliverance, which preſerves the ſeveral elements in that poſition in which they were formed and originally created, that they might be the inſtruments of freeing his people from thoſe frightful and alarming dangers.* And though the Almighty was ever with them, and his awful preſence ſurrounded them, and his all-ſeeing eye watched over them, it did not make thoſe criminals more wary, or behave with greater circumſpection; but they impudently dared this univerſally good Being, who ſpieth out all their ways, and minuteth down every action of their lives. Thus the divine intelligence, by taking cognizance of mens doings, and the different principles and motives from which they ſpring, is perfectly able to judge betwixt the righteous and the wicked, and to puniſh the one, and reward the other, according to the validity and malignity of their deeds. By theſe candid determinations, and equitable proceedings, we may perceive the juſtneſs of God's deciſions, and what will be the effects of righteouſneſs, and the final iſſue of ſin and iniquity, unleſs tranſgreſſors

* After the Babyloniſh captivity, the whole body of the Iſraelites that were in Paleſtine were called Jhudim, or Jews, becauſe the firſt that returned home were chiefly of the tribe of Judah; afterwards that name was given to all the reſt, in whatever part of the world they reſided.— See Le Clerk's Diſſertation on Geneſis.

greſſors abandon their impetuoſity, and the work of converſion be improved and brought to a ſpeedy and timely concluſion. For if this be not done before the door of hope be turned upon us, and the gate of mercy ſhut againſt us, we ſhall be for ever excluded that kingdom, where none but holy ſouls ever enter, and be confined to the doleful region, with the incendiaries of deceit, and of every kind and degree of wickedneſs. All which intimations of wrath, and manifeſtations of infinite ſeverity, were wholly revealed for our ſakes, and not to render God's power more glorious, or his majeſty more bright and conſpicuous; but to gather together the outcaſt of Iſrael, and bring thoſe ſtrayed ſheep into the welcome folds of peace and tranquillity, and the holy incloſures of impregnable ſafety. Theſe benevolent notices were to remind them of him, who, from his unwearied and ever vigilant care, preſerves the ſeveral different ſpecies of beings, and this huge maſs of earth from ruin, out of which they were beautifully and exquiſitely formed by their all-wiſe and all-powerful artificer. But theſe deceived creatures, like deſperate criminals, gave no credit to God's promiſes, nor to any of thoſe ſublime delights which are inſeparably annexed to them, and which cannot be obtained, without complying with the conditions on which they are propoſed and offered to them. Great as theſe obligations and engagements are in themſelves, they neither meliorated the hearts of gainſayers, nor left any ſigns of conviction, but they lived upon the earth, like the Leviathan on the ſea, only to roll about, and to take their paſtime thereon. Thus, this ſelf-willed people requited

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their Maker, and inſtead of reſounding God's praiſes, and the memorable events of his providence, took the timbrel and the harp, and every other muſical inſtrument, and rejoiced at the ſound of the organ; but regarded not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands. Theſe inconſiderate creatures ſcornfully overlooked the bleſſings of heaven, the continued bounties and mercies of every day, which they were ſo richly provided with, and which they poſſeſſed in great abundance, and with ſuch freedom as none could ſufficiently acknowledge, or ever be thankful enough for. The Iſraelites were ſo intoxicated with carnal delights, and their heads ſo buſied in framing ſchemes of vanity, to ſatisfy if poſſible their roving imaginations, that they neither eſteemed God's providence at home, nor valued his care and protection of them abroad; although his hands formed and faſhioned them, and he was in covenant with them: So that whatever might befal this people, through the want of reverence and due ſubmiſſion to Almighty God, if they would but meekly confeſs their faults, and humble themſelves before him, who paſſes by tranſgreſſion and ſin, their backſlidings and frequent revoltings would be forgiven, and God would ſo engage to be their God, that no human ſtrength could divide them, or make a total ſeparation between God and his people. At all times, and in all places, in the midſt of enemies, as well as friends, God was their guardian and guide, and when driven by their envious and malicious foes into the moſt deſperate ſituation, his powerful preſence was with them, to extricate them out of their difficulties, and to lead them with ſafety, through an unfruitful and frightful wilderneſs, into a pleaſant land

abounding

abounding with plenty, and flowing with milk and honey. Theſe extraordinary providences, though wrought on his peoples account, and for their benefit and advantage, ſeldom raiſed in them any pious thoughts, or grateful returns of devout acclamations, but they ſeemed as perſons buried in oblivion, in the ſlaviſh mazes of folly and precipitate rounds of madneſs and diſtraction. They were ſo diſrepectful to their Maker, and ſo forgetful of their divine preſerver, *who kept them as the apple of his eye*, that they provoked *the Lord to jealouſy*, to withdraw his protection from them, and leave this ſtubborn people to themſelves, to follow the blind dictates of miſguided and ungoverned paſſions. *For while the meat was in their mouths, and God was feeding them with Angels Food, and giving them Water out of the hard Rocks*, they ſtill queſtioned whether the Lord was among them, when his munificent hand was ſo viſible, that unleſs they wilfullyſhut their eyes, it might be obſerved and eaſily ſeen by them. Of this infinite goodneſs juſtly complained, and declared, *that the dumb and ſpeechleſs animals* walk more orderly, and were better acquainted with thoſe whoſe buſineſs it was to rule them, and take care to feed them, and treat them with humanity, than his elect were with him, who was always with them, and never abſent from them. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib, but Iſrael doth not know, and my people doth not conſider, nor obſerve thoſe ſtatutes which I have ſet before them* for their inſtruction, uſe and edification. *Can a maid forget her attire, or a bride her ornaments*, yet as impoſſible as this may ſeem, *my people have forgotten me days without number, and provoked me, the holy One of Iſrael.* And what makes it ſtill more ſurpriſing, it was this very

people, whom the Almighty cauſed to walk *by rivers of water in a ſtrange land, wherein they ſhould not ſtumble. For I am the father to Iſrael,* they are my dear children, and my bowels yearn for them, and I am moved with compaſſion towards them.* But they were grown ſo obdurate, that they would not be gained by mercies, nor awed by the moſt terrible threatenings, nor any of thoſe ſublime and angelic bleſſings, which they had the promiſe of, and heaven would undoubtedly beſtow upon them, whenever they forſook their enormities, and turned

* But if it ſhould be aſked why God permits ſin to reign, and ſuch fearful wars and tumults among mankind, when it is in his power to prevent it, and to accompliſh his own glory, and his creatures happineſs without it, it is a queſtion I cannot anſwer, nor any one elſe. And though this difficulty cannot be ſolved, nor this queſtion fully anſwered, yet I doubt not but God, upon folding up the whole plan, will make all thoſe dreadful diſorders and ſeeming irregularities appear as ſo many exquiſite marks of beauty and apparent elegancies.

The true and firm belief of a Deity is a ſure ſupport to all ſerious minds; beſides the future hopes it is pregnant with, it entertains them with tranquillity and internal ſerenity. But were not Omniſcient ſkill to temper and place in due order all thoſe quarrelſome contentious ſpirits which are in the world, they would ſoon render it an uninhabitable iſland, fit for none but wolves and ravenous beaſts of prey, which was wholly ſignified in that fable of Phaeton, who, being admitted for one day to drive the chariot of the ſun, by his unſkilful guidance of it, made it fall to the ground, and burn the world.

Remove but God's providence out of it, and we have nothing to depend upon but chance and fortune, the fickle humours and paſſions of men. It would be as great an unhappineſs as poſſibly could be to be born into ſuch a world, where we ſhould be toſſed up and down, and perpetually liable to all thoſe abuſes, which the ſavage luſts and violence of brutiſh men would put upon us, and be conſtant plagues to us. Is it poſſible for any thing to bear up the ſpirit of a man, that calmly meditates on the true ſtate and condition of the world, if that mind and wiſdom ſhould be taken away, which over-rules all thoſe diſorders that may at any time break forth.

ed to the Lord in righteouſneſs, and purſued the paths of holineſs. The Hebrews had ſo groſſly abuſed thoſe gifts, which the father of ſpirits freely gave them, and which rendered them next to angels in dignity, and that to ſuch ſhameful and abominable uſes as the Divine Being never intended, yet he bore with patience their inſults, in hopes of mending their manners, and reclaiming them from their unſufferable behaviour.

But notwithſtanding theſe continued aggravations, God's powerful arm is not ſhortened, nor the ſources of goodneſs diminiſhed, but he is kind to the broken in heart, and to thoſe that are out of the way, and not only interpoſes his ſovereign authority, but he alſo uſes rational arguments to turn the rebellious to their allegiance, and perſuade them voluntarily to comply, and to deteſt their ſeditious and diſloyal practices. To accompliſh then this weighty concern, and this momentous buſineſs, God, in the moving language of love, acts the part of an afflicted father, who is grieved for his undutiful children, and deſirous of bringing them to reaſon, and to act ſuitably to its ſacred dictates. Come now, ſaith the Lord, let us loſe no time, but let us reaſon or argue the matter together; an amazing inſtance of divine condeſcenſion to appeal to the firmament above, and to the earth beneath, whether he had not clearly diſcovered his love, and apparently ſought the welfare and happineſs of his people! *Hear, O heavens, give ear, O earth! I have nouriſhed and brought up children, but they have rebelled againſt me.* But the conſideration of which, and the fatal conſequences, and the iſſue of ſuch unnatural behaviour, is enough to melt an heart of ſtone, to draw

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forth tears of grief, and overwhelm the mind with ſorrow. *Hearken to me, O my people, give ear unto me, O my nation,* words of inconceivable compaſſion, and endearing expreſſions of love, of an irreſiſtible God ſoliciting ungrateful rebels to avoid their own deſtruction, and all thoſe heavy chaſtiſements which they will be ſcourged with, unleſs they obſerve the ſtatutes of him who is the judge of the world, and ſuperintends and diſpoſes all things in it. What multitudes of alluring motives, and engaging promiſes of preſſing exhortations, of affecting reproofs, are ſcattered throughout the ſacred volumes, to warn men of ſatan's treacherous dealings, and the artful ſnares of the crooked ſerpent, who cunningly conceals his devices, that he may with more ſecrecy, and with more ſucceſs, obſtruct our vigilant endeavours and perſeverance in the work of the Lord. This is apparent to all who conſult the inſpired writers with ſeriouſneſs, and the unprejudiced eye of candour, and a real deſire to profit by them, and be ſharers in thoſe promiſes which were made to eaſe the ſorrowful, and revive the dejected, to ſupport the weak, and to convey ſpiritual ſtrength and everlaſting tranquillity and conſolation to their ſouls. In order to acquire theſe ends, and anſwer thoſe gracious purpoſes of recovering fallen creatures from ruin, how emphatically does God call upon men, how paſſionately he addreſſes their ſouls, not to oppoſe his generous intentions, nor to be over-ruled by fictions, or the ſeducements of an evil heart; but to endeavour to overcome theſe and all other temptations, that they might ſhare in his affections, and be defended by his uncontroulable and irreſiſtible arm. All which ſtupendous mercies and undeſerved bounties

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are the mere effects of kindneſs, and infinitely excel every thing that the human mind can conceive, or poſſibly be named either in heaven or in earth, or the waters under the earth. Notwithſtanding the inconceivableneſs of theſe mercies, the Jews were ſo averſe to divine inſtruction, that they held the divine omnipotence in contempt, and inſtead of hearkening to his rebukes, or offering the oblation of praiſe and thankſgiving, or ſeeking to pacify his anger by works of righteouſneſs and deep humiliation, behaved with the greateſt inſolence, and like profligate creatures, who neither valued his commands, nor eſteemed his rational inſtitutions; for they ſet holy things at nought, and rejected the uſe of thoſe ordinances which were to excite holy obedience, to influence the pure flame of devotion, and keep them in ſubjection to that all-powerful and benevolent Being, who placed the ſands of the ſea by a perpetual decree, over which none could paſs without his ſovereign will and divine permiſſion. The Iſraelites were ſo prone to idolatry, and to join in affinity with the Egyptians, which was abſolutely forbid by their ritual, that they would not own the Lord for their God, but lived as creatures void of underſtanding, and not like moral agents, who were endowed with reaſon, and capable of *chuſing the good and refuſing the evil.* They, notwithſtanding the abuſe of their faculties, were favoured by heaven with an intelligible ſyſtem, or body of equitable laws, for the conduct of their lives, and due government of their paſſions, and inſtruction in the worſhip of God, that they might ſtedfaſtly cleave to him, *who hath ſhewed his word unto Jacob, and his ſtatutes and ordinances unto*

unto Iſrael; he hath not dealt ſo with any nation, neither have the Heathen knowledge of his law. The law interwoven in their hearts was ſo dreadfully marred by ſin, and acts of uncleanneſs, that it was but a faint or glimmering light, in compariſon of that law which the Jews received on Mount Sinai, and which they enjoyed above any people or kingdom whatſoever. Moſes might well boaſt of it, and ſay, what nation is there that hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous as all this law which I ſet before you this day, or what nation is there ſo great, who hath God ſo nigh unto them in all that we call upon him for. This untoward people had not only the moral law, but alſo the urim and thummim, the fire from heaven, which burnt continually upon the altar, and the ark of the covenant, with the mercy ſeat, above which appeared the cloud of glory between the cherubims.

* Theſe ſymbols were not deſigned to repreſent an Oſiris or Iſis, or deified heroes, among the Heathens, but Jehovah the Lord, the true God, and king of Iſrael, and of every creature through this tremenduous whole, and the immeaſurable expanſe of heaven. The main intent of God's revealing himſelf thus, was to ſhew unſteady and inconſtant beings, how fatal their obſtinate unbelief and wilful departure from him muſt of conſequence prove, if they were unfaithful, and would

*This was the place of God's ſpecial reſidence among the Iſraelites, where he diſplayed tokens of his immediate and merciful preſence, and delivered out his orders and commands from between theſe two cherubims, the emblems of the heavenly hoſt, and of the bright retinue of the angels which attend the throne of God's majeſty. But Iſis and Oſiris were princes of Egypt while they lived, and Gods of the Egyptians after their death. Ammon, while he lived, governed Egypt as a king, and after his death, was conſulted as an oracle, which for a long time continued one of the moſt famous in the world.

would not abide by him, nor attend to his precepts. The Iſraelites, inſtead of obſerving theſe benign warnings, ſo acted the part of reproachful apoſtates, that they deſerted the one true God, and worſhipped and ſerved ſtrange Gods, *whom their fathers knew not; Gods that came newly up, whom their fathers feared not; but forgot the God that formed them,* and deſpiſed his glorious majeſty, who alone was able to ſave or to deſtroy them. They, for all theſe ſignal marks of divine favour, ſinned yet more and more, and fell away like their forefathers, *ſtarting aſide like a broken bow.* Their abominations were ſo heinous, and their idolatry ſo horrible, that they grieved him with their hill altars, and provoked him to diſpleaſure with their images and other hateful practices; ſo that, if the Jewiſh hiſtory be true, or the deſcription of that people is to be credited, none ever carried themſelves more haughtily, or with greater arrogancy toward their liberal creator, than theſe audacious creatures.

They were not only guilty of fraud and injuſtice of profaning God's ſabbaths, and blaſpheming his holy name, but alſo drunkenneſs and intemperance, of ſloth and idleneſs, which is an inlet to every vice, and obſtruction to every virtue, and to every generous and laudable undertaking: theſe facts are too ſtubborn, and too notorious to be denied, or to be diſputed by any. Joſephus, one of their own countrymen, and bred up in Jewiſh principles, confeſſed, that no people ever ſuffered ſuch miſeries from the beginning of the world, as the Jews did by the Romans, and that none ever abounded more in lewdneſs and debauchery, in oaths and imprecations, and all manner of vice and wickedneſs. Surely, if any

had

had cauſe for lamentation, or to ſay, *we lie down in our ſhame, and our confuſion covered us*, this people certainly had great reaſon to bewail their tranſgreſſions. *For we and our forefathers from our youth, even to this very day, have ſinned againſt the Lord our God.* This evidently appears from God's command requiring them to ſearch Jeruſalem, and not to tarry, but to run through the ſtreets of that great populous city, and ſee now, and know, and ſeek in the broad places thereof, or where the greateſt concourſe of people reſort, if there be any that executeth judgment and ſeeketh the truth, and I will pardon it. I will, for the ſake of the righteous, if there be any ſuch, forgive the wickedneſs of the wicked; but he looked for judgment, and behold oppreſſion, and for righteouſneſs, but behold a cry. Theſe expreſſions denote the ſcarcity of good men, when compared with the corrupt and debauched multitude, and ſuch as dare contend with God, who rules angels and men, and has every element under his controul, and at his ſole diſpoſal and abſolute command. Theſe fooliſh, ſottiſh creatures, not conſidering their own intereſt, and that their only ſecurity lay in that irreſiſtible Being, who upholds the laws of nature, and orders the bright luminaries of heaven, feared not his awful dignity, but complied with the inducements to ſin, and followed the delights of iniquity. For the Hebrews, after they had ſeen God work mighty and terrible wonders in Egypt, and had ſeen him divide the ſea, and make the waters to ſtand on an heap, lead them in the day with a cloud, and in the night with a pillar of fire, and cleave the hard rocks in the wilderneſs, and gave them drink out of the great

great depths, they tempted God in their hearts, ſaying, Can he who ſmote the rocks, ſo that the waters guſhed out, can he, in their ſcornful depreciating language, prepare a table in the wilderneſs, or provide fleſh for his people? When God, to remove their groundleſs ſcruples, commanded the clouds above, and opened the windows of heaven, ſo that man did eat angels food, they ſtill rebelled and wiſhed they had died in the wilderneſs, and made their graves in Egypt. Nay, though God, according to his promiſe, brought them within the borders of his ſanctuary, even to the mountain which he purchaſed with his right hand, and caſt out the Heathen from before them, and made the tribes of Iſrael to dwell in their tents, ſigns and wonders more than enough to ſatisfy minds rightly diſpoſed, and willing to own the divine ſovereignty, yet they believed not in God, nor truſted in his ſalvation. But notwithſtanding their unreaſonable incredulity, the all-wiſe and perfectly good Being did not totally deſert them, nor his infinite clemency and unſpeakable love forſake them, but he continually multiplied his bleſſings, and ſhewed the deepeſt concern for them, in order to remove their infidelity and gain the affections of his people. For when almoſt driven to deſpair, and their condition, to human ſight, ſeemed deſperate, that Omniſcient and Omnipotent ſpirit, which is diffuſed through this ſtupendous maze, and enlivens and quickens the ſeveral parts of matter, and gives vigour and vivacity to all our actions, turned their bittereſt groans into rejoicing, and the loud reſounding echoes of praiſe. But although they experienced his care, the Iſraelites within awhile forgot his works,

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and would not abide his counſels. Such was this peoples impetuoſity and unbelief, that no miracles affected them, nor arguments convinced them, or made them more ſubmiſſive, or obſervant of thoſe laws which God had revealed for their inſtruction and direction. And though the divine Being permits ſin to reign, and to be ſo rapid in its motions as to alter the nature of man, and make the human mind ſtagger, yet it cannot alter the nature of God, or make him unmindful of ſuch as endeavour to honour and revere his holy name. Of this then we may be certain, that the great arbiter of life, the mighty and eternal God, who changes times and ſeaſons, hath, can, and often does, by means the moſt unlikely, and what we, with all our ſagacity and deepeſt penetration, could never have any conceptions or ideas of, raiſed us from the moſt pitiable circumſtances, and brought us to, and placed us in, a more comfortable and much happier ſituation. So that however difficult things may appear to the view of limited underſtandings, they have no reaſon to be diſmayed, but may, with modeſt aſſurance, conclude that God, who is eſſentially juſt and unchangeably holy, will ſupport his own righteous cauſe, and be ever careful of ſuch as act ſuitably to the relation in which they ſtand to God and one another. Were God's dealings tried with candour, and the impartial rules of juſtice, the Deity could not be accuſed of implacableneſs, or acting upon men as mere machines, as if he delighted to teaſe and vex ſuch as were unable to oppoſe him, or to diſpute with him, who is uncontroulable in power, and whom none can reſiſt, or can ſtand before. For the flaming ſword of infinite wrath is ruled by the flowing

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ſtreams of love, and God, who always acts according to reaſon, and the nature of things, never executes vengeance on any, except ſuch as ſport with his judgments, and will take no warning by them, but turn his admonitions into drollery, and blaſpheme his awful reports, and the ſacred diction of his word. When infinite patience and forbearance are thus abuſed, which are ſo many ſprings and emanations of love, which ought to excite diligence, and unite us to our heavenly father, they only give opportunity to open the ſluices of ungodlineſs, and forward the raging waves of iniquity. I ſay, if God then ſhews his indignation, men muſt not complain of rigorous ſeverity, or offer to blame their merciful creator, who bears long with them before he manifeſts his power, or before he gives the fatal blow, or ſtrikes the final ſtroke. The irreligious are ſo wedded to diſſipation, and the enticing lure of vanity, that they will not forſake their evil purſuits, till the lamp of life is near conſumed, or there is little or no oil to feed it, or to keep alive that uſeful and neceſſary flame. And though the preſent life is momentary, and our continuance here very uncertain, and our well-being in the next life depends upon our behaviour in this, yet deceived minds are ſo infatuated, that they overlook the one thing needful, in compariſon of which all the dazzling glitter of this world, and its magnificent repreſentations, are but flying ſhadows and deluſive dreams, which quickly paſs away, and are ſeen no more. Perſons of this reſtleſs and unhappy caſt prefer the dull reiterated circles of ſenſuality, and the gilded roofs of earthly manſions, which ſoon vaniſh into ſmoak, and lie undiſtinguiſhed in the ruins of time, where all things

things loſe their delicate form, and their exquiſite beauty.* Carnal minds, inſtead of making God their refuge, and the ſole object of their deſires, ſo extravagantly humour their paſſions, that they crave with greater vehemence, and urge with ſuch violence, as not to be bounded by reaſon, nor controuled by the principles of religion. So that whenever the underſtanding is oppreſſed, and men are bent upon indulging their appetites, they make fearful havock in all places, and break down the fence of virtue, and throw every thing into diſorder, and the whole world into tumult. Theſe are the dreadful conſequences of yielding to and complying with illegal inducements, not being ſubject to the ſupreme powers and leading faculties of our ſouls; by which means ſedition, diſſention, tyranny and ambition, rapine and cruelty, violence and oppreſſion, are become ſo epidemical, that all ranks and orders of men are more or leſs poiſoned with theſe pernicious and reigning vices. Creatures of this iniquitous ſtamp, who have loſt all ſenſe of religion, and ſtifle the motion of God's holy ſpirit, and will not liſten to its ſacred calls, often launch into ſuch extravagancies as enervate the powers of the ſoul, and render men incapable of governing themſelves, or of maſtering their imperious and domineering foes. By ſubmitting to their virulent demands, and fooliſhly gratifying their exorbitant claims, men, for want of thought and due conſideration, frame the baſeſt deſigns, and complete ſuch villanous

* We are loſt and ſurrounded with Spirit, the mind can as eaſily forſake itſelf as to quit the divine preſence. Motion or diſtance cannot ſeparate them. In the rural ſcenary of nature we almoſt feel the Shechinah, or the unſeen glory, that animates and

ous ſchemes as naturally deſtroy that confidence and ſatisfaction which is the reſult of upright dealings, and the punctual obſervance of what we ſay or what we do. Were the ſpirit of malevolence ſuppreſſed, and commendable qualities cheriſhed and duly improved, miſtruſt and jealouſies, diſſimulation and hypocriſy, wrath and anger would ſoon ſubſide, and find no harbour in our breaſts to torture and rack our minds. Theſe diſturbers

and eradicates the landſcape like a dream, which ſtrongly poſſeſſeth us in confuſion, while we labour to recollect it in vain. No wonder the ancient Heathen, who had the Deity much to ſeek, ſacrificed in groves, imagined they found the holy influences there in the prodigious and ſublime parts of the creation, which we are aſtoniſhed at. The mind as it were opens its eyes with wonder, with rapture, and ſacred horror: We ſee the divine and awful traces in mighty mountains, in precipices and oceans, and hear the conſcious echo of the Divinity in ſtorms and breaking ſeas, like a deſerted infant, that hath loſt its mother, and in deep diſtreſs, juſt got a glympſe of her diſtant voice, the human mind ſprings forward at the ideas of ſtupendous power and grandeur, and panting with eager, conſcious delight, forſakes with contempt and diſguſt the low ideas of matter: And if poets expreſſed ſuch ſentiments by ſoaring rapturous tranſports and flights, they did ſo becauſe it is not in the power of language, in proper words, to repreſent the unutterable motions of the mind, by which it attempts to diſengage itſelf of its preſent incumbrances, and become a ſuperior being in a better ſcene, for which it enlarges its views and conceptions a thouſand fold by a power wholly divine, that it knew not of. See a new creation fixed on the ſolid baſes of eternity, launching along this unceaſing line, and a perpetual determined reſolution, and variety of beings and life, all depending on the limited, erected attractions and repulſions of a few ſtable and unchangeable elements. Can thought riſe to any thing ſo noble, ſo great and ſtupendous in the effect, or ſo plain and ſimple in the cauſe? Thou ſupreme Spirit, it is thy power by which mountains and vallies, foreſt and ocean are wonderfully animated, and the whole creation in beauty and proportion ariſe to being.—See a new Philoſophical Syſtem, by the learned Mr. Uſher.

of our peace would be baniſhed that repoſitory, and not ſuffered to torment our ſpirits; but we, in ſome degree, ſhould commence an heaven upon earth, and be almoſt as happy as the ſaints and angels in heaven. The not watching over ourſelves, and not weighing the conſequence of things, expoſe us to multitude of temptations, and the furious attacks of ungoverned tempers, which too often betray us, and grow ſo tyrannical, that the diligent centinal within, which is God's deputy in the ſoul, and which ought to be heard and attended to, is inſulted with criminal boldneſs, and unbearable violence. Offenders thus daring in wickedneſs are ſo ſhrouded with theſe deluſions, and ſo unapprehenſive of thoſe dangers which hover over their heads, that the ſtrongeſt arguments, and moſt elevating motives, will not prevail with them to relinquiſh their vices, nor incline them to do thoſe things which reaſon, intereſt and duty require. But notwithſtanding God's forbearance is abuſed, and advice is thus ſcornfully rejected, he, in the feeling bowels of ſympathy, entreats ſuch to leave their licentious converſation, and to take ſanctuary in his mercy, which all will reap the benefit of, by obſerving the orders of that plan, which was formed for our guidance, and the government of the world: For God, by ſo doing, not only diſcovers his fatherly care and paternal indulgence, and his readineſs to forgive, on the rational terms of faith and ſincere repentance; but he alſo urges theſe conciliating duties as the way to ſtrengthen our belief, and to animate our hopes and expectations, amidſt all the various turnings and crooked windings of this our inconſtant and unſettled ſtate: But depraved creatures,

tures, who nouriſh their inherent corruption, refuſe to uſe thoſe ordinances which infinite wiſdom hath ordained to eradicate that deadly poiſon, which will, without grief of heart, depreſs the intelectual powers of the ſoul, and raiſe ſuch fearful agitations within, as render thoſe froward beings a torment to themſelves, and all with whom they are concerned, or have any connexions with: In a word, both Jews and Gentiles have ſo corrupted their morals, that they defy the Holy One of Iſrael, the ſupreme Lawgiver and Ruler of all creatures, from the brighteſt ſeraph in heaven to the meaneſt reptile on earth. The refractory act againſt the conviction of conſcience, and the admonitions of this divine guardian, the watchful eye of the ſoul, who obſerves all its cloſeſt motions, and all its hidden and retired ſprings. Sinful amuſements have ſeized their minds, and they entertain ſuch falſe and groſs ideas of perſons and things, as muſt neceſſarily and of courſe make them deſpiſe the threats and menaces of their internal intelligence, and ſet at nought his ſacred advice and moſt ſerviceable inſtruction. They ſeem reſolved to continue in wicked habits, and give ſcope to their horrid impurities, the mentioning of which to chaſte ears would be apt to make nature ſhudder, and put ſuch for ever out of countenance, when their filthy deeds are detected, and their vile abominations expoſed, ſo that St. Paul's deſcription of the Heathen World, and the blindneſs of that idolatrous and licentious people, may, with great propriety, be applied to both, and with the ſtricteſt truth affirmed, that all had forſook the true Deity, *and*

changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, aud to birds, and four footed beaſts, and to creeping things; wherefore God gave them up to uncleanneſs, through the luſts of their own hearts, to diſhonour their own bodies between themſelves, who changed the truth of God into a lye, and worſhipped the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, bleſſed for evermore: For this cauſe God gave them up to vile affections; for even their women burned in their luſts one towards another, men working with men that which is unſeemly, receiving in themſelves that recompence of their error which was meet; and even as they did not like to retain God in knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteouſneſs, fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whiſperers, backbiters, haters of God, deſpiteful, proud, boaſters, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. Men, by thus humouring brutal appetites, and by polluting their corrupt hearts, become deaf to the moſt awakening calls, and ſtand guilty before God, and cannot demur to the aſſertion which is written, *there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that underſtandeth; there is none that doeth good, no not one: Their throat is an open ſepulchre, with their tongues they have uſed deceit, the poiſon of aſps is under their lips, whoſe mouths are full of curſing and bitterneſs; their feet are ſwift to ſhed blood, deſtruction and miſery are in the way, and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes.* And therefore men guilty of the fouleſt and blackeſt vices can have nothing to offer in their defence, or to alledge againſt

againſt their maker, who is upright in all his ways, and impartial and equitable in all his deciſions. But notwithſtanding this univerſal corruption of life and manners, which is become ſo epidemical, and reigns ſo rapidly among men, that *the earth is covered with violence, and all fleſh have corrupted their ways*, yet God bears their indignities and affronts with ſurpriſing patience, and, inſtead of exerciſing wrath, diſcovers that benignity of nature which ungrateful creatures are ſtrangers to and wholly unacquainted with, and entirely deſtitute of. In order to ſubdue refractory ſpirit, infinite and unlimited wiſdom did, by his holy prophets, at ſundry times, and in divers manners, unfold his love with increaſing light, to make dark minds ſee their danger, and give them brighter views and more lively hopes of immortality. This God does to encourage ſinners to come to him, and to return without delay to the exerciſe of virtue, and the conſtant obſervation and religious practiſe of their duty. The Almighty purſued this method, as a neceſſary expedient to reduce the clamorous and ſupercilious to ſubmiſſion, that they might walk more warily, be more obedient to providence, and rendered objects more worthy of God, and of his concern and paternal regard: All which the Divine Omnipotence did to bend the ſtubborn wills of ſinful men, to make their mutinous powers ſubſide, and bring them to live as thoſe who have experienced *that the Lord is gracious and tender hearted*, but all his labours are vain, and his works unfruitful; and notwithſtanding mens high aggravations, and contempt of God's ſupreme authority, and his univerſal dominion, the divine Being changes not, nor re-

cedes from his immutable purpoſe, but is as ready to forgive and aſſiſt humble penitents as if they had never tranſgreſſed, or deviated from his ſacred laws. There is no imperfection in God, no alteration in the Divine Supremacy, nor inconſtancy in his diſpoſition; but God is at all times, and in the worſt of circumſtances able to relieve and provide for the diſtreſſed, if they will fly to him for ſhelter, and take refuge in the divine All-ſufficiency. God is the ſame now as in the days of old, and in the generations that are paſſed; he is a God whoſe councils ſtand for ever, and whoſe will is always the ſame, under all the tragical ſcenes and different changes of human life; an alteration in man makes no alteration in God, but in every period of being, he is ready to comfort the ſorrowful, and relieve the afflicted, whenever they need his help, and conform to his divine plan. For God, who is love itſelf, and an ocean of infinite kindneſs, is ſo tranſcendently good, that no aggravations from men, nor ſpecies of ingratitude, can totally wear out his patience, nor leſſen his invariable eſteem for ſuch as relinquiſh their former malignant courſes, and chearfully acquieſce with the divine propoſals. This we have abundant proof of, and the greateſt reaſon to believe, from the numberleſs inſtances of God's favours, in not only loading us with mercies, ſuch as the ordinary conveniences of life, and the neceſſary comforts of every day, but alſo in exhibiting ſpiritual mercies, and the ſtupendous riches of divine grace. Theſe unſpeakable bleſſings were conveyed to us by one much dearer and more near to him than all the other meſſengers or prophets of old, ſince the wonderful formation

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of the world, and peopling this huge and mighty maſs of earth. For in the fulneſs of time, or the time moſt agreeable to infinite wiſdom, and the grand ſcheme of providence, God ſent his begotten and only beloved Son, the everlaſting object of his delight, in whom all fulneſs dwells, and in whom the Father was well pleaſed. This undertaking was generouſly performed to reſtore the diſperſed of Judah; to proclaim remiſſion of ſins; to comfort thoſe that mourn in Zion; to preach deliverance to captives; to enlighten thoſe that ſit in darkneſs, and in the melancholy ſhades, and dreary gloom of death: The ſcope of which animating declaration, and the directions exhibited in it, were not deſigned to countenance ſlothful indulgence, nor to hinder the moderate uſe of appetite; but to reduce them to reaſon, and to the order of Providence, and the moral conſtitution of the world. Our compliance with theſe beneficial rules, and exerciſing the faculties of our ſouls, on the beſt and ſublimeſt objects, is the way to open and enlarge our underſtandings, to make ſuch impreſſions on our wills, as make us more alert in our duty, and more aſſiduous to pleaſe him, who will ſupport us in the deepeſt extremity, and abundantly recompence his faithful ſervants. Men, by entertaining honourable conceptions of God, and right apprehenſions of his nature and attributes, will not only with the divine concurrence be able to looſen the painful ſhackles of ſin, and throw off thoſe deadly incumbrances which clog the immaterial ſoul, and obſtruct its ſpiritual operations, but they will be brought with freedom to worſhip the one true and everlaſting God, the only delight of renewed and ſanctified minds. And

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though intelligent beings are thus inſtructed, and affectionately called upon to leave their odious and deteſtable idolatry, and their other brutiſh and unſeemly practices, by no leſs perſon than the Son of God, from whom angels derive their luſtre, and by whom all things in heaven and earth, viſible and inviſible, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, were made and created, yet they neither valued his greatneſs, nor reverenced his authority; but theſe ſordid deluded creatures, inſtead of embracing his doctrine, or learning his ſalutary leſſons of peace and love, or honouring him as a teacher come from God, treat him as the vileſt impoſtor, and purſued him with all that malice that malevolence could poſſibly invent, or envy could conceive.

For all this baſe uſage and miſrepreſenting of his words and actions, he retained that good temper and diſpoſition for his people, which diſcovered itſelf at his death, as well as in his paſtlife, and all that their perfidiouſneſs and cruelty could not obſtruct his kindneſs, nor hinder him from ſhewing his concern for his implacable and virulent foes. Of this we have abundant proof, in the life of the beneficent and humble Jeſus, and that in the higheſt degree, by his returning good for evil, which is the nobleſt effect of goodneſs, and the neareſt reſemblance of God, our beſt friend and univerſal benefactor. For when his hands and feet were nailed to the croſs, and every nerve cruelly extended, he bore their barbarity with patience, and their ſcoffs and buffetings with ſubmiſſion to him who acts in every reſpect as becomes an infinitely wiſe and gracious Deity, who aims at the good of his creatures. For when hindered from acts of benevolence, he diſcovered

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the goodneſs of his heart in offering up petitions to heaven, for his betrayers and murderers, that their ſins might be cancelled, and their puniſhments remitted.

The meek and unblamable Jeſus, when in the extremity of pain, and when pierced with many ſorrows, uſed expreſſions ſufficient to ſoften the hardeſt heart, and melt the moſt obdurate into contrition, by pleading for their pardon and forgiveneſs, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* He could have called to the avenger of oppreſſed innocence for twelve legions of angels, and all the hoſts of heaven, to have delivered him, and deſtroyed them, but he poured out his ſoul unto death, and for their ſakes was numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and ſuffered as the worſt of malefactors; but for all his amazing kindneſs, and the benignity of his god-like temper, in overlooking the greateſt enormities of the Jews, who would not liſten to him, nor comply with his celeſtial precepts, they were ſo ſwelled with pride, and carried away with ambitious views, and the notions of a temporal prince, who was to appear in mighty pomp, and with a numerous and ſplendid retinue; that they could not brook a king of ſo mean and contemptible a figure, who brought no trophies of victory, or enſigns of earthly grandeur to dazzle their underſtandings, and captivate their affections; ſo bent on their fooliſh conceits, and maintaining their haughty ideas, that no arguments were forcible enough, nor the ſtrongeſt reaſoning ſufficient to make them relinquiſh their prepoſſeſſions, and ſubmit to the doctrines and precepts of the inſtructive Jeſus: And though theſe imperious creatures were thus perverſe, and vehemently

hemently oppoſed that ſcheme of mercy, which God, from his innate regard for the miſerable, and thoſe that were out of the way, planned and modelled from the beginning to effect their recovery, yet they could not fruſtrate his purpoſe of ſaving ſuch as return to their allegiance, and will be friends to themſelves, and their own important and everlaſting intereſt.

This is ſo agreeable to the maxims of reaſon, and the vehement cravings of our immaterial ſpirits, that no rational being, conſiſtent with that exalted character, can have any ſort of objection to them, without betraying his diſlike to virtue, and to all ſocial and religious inſtructions.

God, for theſe holy purpoſes, generouſly reveals his deſigns to men, that they might not wander in the dark, nor be loſt in the miſt of error, and the pernicious and weariſome rounds of ſuperſtition, but be brought to abhor that cruel tyrant, who, like a ſubtil mercenary enemy, goes about ſeeking whom he may betray, and by his cunning devices devour. The better to conquer this buſy incendiary, and be guarded againſt his ſuggeſtions, Chriſt voluntarily left the manſions of light, and appeared in the form of a ſervant, and became obedient unto death, even the painful death of the croſs, that we might die unto ſin, and live unto God, and be armed with the ſhield of faith, and the ſword of the Spirit: Wherefore we, in point of gratitude, ought to be thankful, and to double our diligence, and be more mindful of him who hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, and the terrible things it charges us with, and bitterly writes againſt us. In order to heighten and enlarge our ideas of his wonderful providence, we muſt contemplate the amiable

amiable Jeſus, in his low eſtate of incarnation, which was deſigned to be a general and univerſal good, and to exhibit a lively emblem and ſpecimen of that ſovereign goodneſs, to whom we are obliged for all thoſe ſtupendous favours, which flow from that inexhauſtible ſources, which are conſigned over to us, on our voluntary ſubmiſſion and perſeverance in ſacred courſes; and though there is nothing in this repugnant to moral rectitude, and all the divine perfections, yet it is a matter of no ſmall aſtoniſhment, and ſo ſurpaſſes the moſt refined and created underſtanding, that even the eloquence of an angel would be unequal to its greatneſs, and the ſublimity of this argument; much leſs the declamations of fallible men, who can no more fathom this myſtery than they can number the ſands of the ſea, or count the perpetual circles of eternity. It is impoſſible for our reaſoning powers, or the dim taper of natural light, without the ſhining lamp of revelation, to have any conceptions how our rebellion could be expiated by the ſacrifice of the croſs, or the bleſſed Jeſus could deliver men from ſpiritual thraldom, and reſtore them to that happy paradiſe,* in which they

* Paradiſe, What place is it? Our Saviour ſpeaks theſe words to a Jew, and intended to be underſtood by him from the Jews, and therefore from them we muſt learn the meaning of that word. Paradiſe originally meant the Garden of Eden, where our firſt parents dwelt in a ſtate of happineſs and innocence: Hence the Jews uſed the word to repreſent the place where the ſouls of the righteous go when they are ſeparated from the body. They diſtinguiſh paradiſe from heaven, and ſo doth St. Paul, when he ſpeaks of his viſions and revelations. Again, our Saviour repreſents Lazarus as carried after death to Abraham's boſom. This was another name for that ſtate of peace and comfort, to which the ſpirits of the righteous

they enjoyed peace and ſerenity before their revolt, and the forfeiture of divine ſecurity. They were ſo altered in their natures, and ſo propenſe

righteous were conveyed. This doctrine was conſtantly received and believed in the primitive church. In proceſs of time, ſome new notions and practices were introduced: Firſt of all prayers for the dead, which is indeed a practice of no ſmall antiquity, but thoſe prayers for the dead were rather pious wiſhes; they were offered for all thoſe that died in the faith, that they, with thoſe who were ſtill living upon earth, might partake together of a joyful and glorious reſurrection, at the laſt tremendous day. To ſay the truth, this ſeems to be a kind of will-worſhip, and a practice not commanded in the New Teſtament. Then came in the doctrine of purgatory, and the doctrine of praying to departed ſaints. The doctrine of purgatory was founded upon a ſuppoſition that the ſouls of imperfect Chriſtians go into a ſtate of temporary puniſhment, and may be relieved by the prayers and other ceremonies of the church; and then, that prayers might be purchaſed by pious legacies, which proved an inexhauſtible mine of ſilver and gold to the Romiſh clergy.

Prayers to ſaints were founded on another notion, that thoſe holy perſons were in heaven, and would there interceed with God for us, of which interceſſion there is no ſhadow of proof in Scripture. The only proof was that of lying miracles and enthuſiaſtic viſions.

This doctrine you may obſerve doth not agree with praying for the dead in general, ſince ſuch prayers for the dead ſuppoſe they were admitted into heaven before the general reſurrection.

Here let me add two or three paſſages more from the New Teſtament, relating to the interval betwixt death and the reſurrection.

The firſt is the account of Chriſt's transfiguration, at which time the avangeliſts inform us that Moſes and Elias came and converſed with Jeſus, and were ſeen and heard by thoſe diſciples who were preſent. As to Elias, he died not, but, like Enoch before him, was taken up into heaven. But of Moſes it is written, that he died and was buried. This account is therefore a fair intimation that good men continue to live and to act after they are releaſed from this mortal body. The other paſſage is that in the Revelations: *I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, write, yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

penſe to evil cuſtoms, and to vitiated habits, that they were not only enemies to themſelves, and to thoſe of their own ſpecies, but they lived at enmity with God, and proclaimed hoſtilities againſt their maker, who would have cooled their flaming heats, and have taken them under his protection, and defended them with his holy arm and the boſſes of his buckler. Would we be cured of theſe diſeaſes, and walk with perfect freedom, in the ſafe paths of righteouſneſs all the days of our appointed time, till our warfare is accompliſhed, we muſt obſerve our bleſſed Maſter's com-

There is nothing in a ſtate of inſenſibility that ſeems to deſerve the title of bleſſedneſs or happineſs, and if we ſhould grant it to be a bleſſing, the wicked would have it as much as the good, during the interval of inactivity: But in the ſame book the righteous are deſcribed as in a waking condition: *I ſaw*, ſays St. John, *under the altar, the ſouls of them that were ſlain for the word of God, and they cried how long, O Lord, holy and true, doſt thou not judge and avenge our blood, and it was ſaid to them, that they ſhould reſt for a little ſeaſon.* This is a viſionary ſcene, and yet it intimates that thoſe holy martyrs were in an holy ſtate.

And now for the application of the foregoing doctrine; and I ſhall conſider it as matter of hope and conſolation to all thoſe who endeavour to obtain and ſecure the favour of God. The reward of eternal life is promiſed to the good at the reſurrection; as it is more than the beſt men can claim as their due, and the effect of the mere bounty of it is ſurely ſufficient to encourage and content them; ſuppoſe when they die they ſhould ſleep till the Lord comes and awakes them, yet they conſider that ſleep as a reſt from labour, and a protection from temptations, a calm repoſe under the wings of the Almighty. In a ſleep, without ſenſation, be it long or ſhort, the interval is as nothing; and in this caſe a thouſand years are but as one day, yea, as one moment. It is like cloſing the eyes and opening them again inſtantly. But as I have been endeavouring to ſhew you, it is more probable that the interval between death and the reſurrection is not a ſleep to the ſervants of Chriſt, but the removal of the ſoul to the place called Paradiſe. It is not a ſtupid inſenſible reſt, accompanied with conſciouſneſs and

commands, that we may be members of his community, and live in holy fellowſhip with one another, by conſtant attendance at the altar, and on all religious inſtitutions. For the ſacred ordinances of Chriſt are ſo excellent, and of ſuch an heavenly compoſition, that they diſtill ſuch balm into our ſouls, as will heal the ſoreſt wounds, and the moſt corroding maladies, which the oppoſite principles and practices made, and make us more punctual, and more ſerious and devout in God's ſervice. For the fragrant odour they diffuſe may be compared to the ointment poured on Aaron's head, or on the refreſhing dews of Hermon, which made the country ſhare of its copious and moſt extenſive bleſſings. The pious conſideration of which mercies, and of God's inexpreſſible

ſatisfaction; it is a place of the beſt and moſt deſirable company, where dwell the ſpirits of juſt men, and holy martyrs and confeſſors, where the Angels of God go to and fro, and which probably the Son of God himſelf ſometimes favours with his preſence. In this ſafe retirement there are no wicked intruders; no evil ſpirits to ſeduce; no temptations of any kind to make their aſſaults. It is a Place whence ſin, and ſorrow, and fear are baniſhed, and where there is peace, and love, and hope, and expectation, of ſtill greater rewards.

As to the wicked and impenitent, let them not flatter themſelves with the vain hopes of ſleeping till the Day of Judgment, and if it ſhould be ſo, the ſenſeleſs interval doth not remove the fatal hour, but death and the reſurrection will ſeem to them cloſely united together.

Upon the ſuppoſition that death is a ſtate of lethargy, overſhadowed with profound darkneſs, till Chriſt ariſes and ſhines upon it at the laſt day; upon this ſuppoſition, I ſay, a Chriſtian might more reaſonably deſire to continue a little longer, becauſe he hath here ſome opportunity of doing good, being buſy in his vocation. Upon the ſuppoſition of the Romiſh church, that after death there follows a burning firey furnace, called Purgatory, a Chriſtian might well be afraid to die, but the Scriptures teach us better things.—See an excellent Sermon on this ſubject, by the pious and learned Dr. Jortain.

inexpreſſible love, when it enters into the folds of the heart, and poſſeſſes its cloſeſt receſſes, will fill our minds with joy, and conſtrain us, with the profoundeſt alacrity, to uſe all thoſe talents of power and authority, of wiſdom and knowledge, of wealth and reputation, of opportunity and advantage, to fill up the general plan, and to forward all its valuable ends, and moſt admirable purpoſes. This is obvious from our Lord's converſation, and the deep concern and affection he expreſſed for his choſen, when they were on the brink of ruin and utter deſtruction, and ſeem to have no regard for themſelves, nor care for the intereſt of their better, and their infinitely more important affair. The blameleſs Jeſus manifeſtly diſcovered his love, by thoſe moving words which he often made uſe of, when he wept over Jeruſalem, the grand metropolis of Judea, to remind the Hebrews of the ſad cataſtrophe which he admoniſhed them of, that they might avoid that terrible event, that lamentable ſcene of deſolation, and inexpreſſible deſtruction. For had this people obſerved his admonition, and his friendly and uſeful precepts, which he often and forcibly inculcated upon them, they had been covered with the wings of mercy, and with the extenſive arms of Omnipotence, and of the univerſal efficacy of love. Our Lord obſerving the Iſraelites inflexibility, addreſſed them in his wonted manner in the ſoft language of gentleneſs, and the feeling ſentiments of humanity, to convince them, if poſſible, that their ruin is of themſelves, and chargeable to their own perverſe diſpoſition, and not to the impulſe of irreſiſtible power, or the blind decrees of inexorable fate. *O Jeruſalem! Jeruſalem! Thou that killeſt the Prophets,*

Prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto you, (thoſe celeſtial meſſengers of peace, and ambaſſadors of love) *how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not,* behold now for your invincible obſtinacy, and rejecting my benevolent reproofs, and the kind meſſages of others, *your houſe is left deſolate,* and yourſelves expoſed to miſery, and to the moſt frightful devaſtations. For God, who is infinite in goodneſs, and an overflowing ſpring of love, never exerciſes his juſtice on any till he hath proved them by beneficence, and endeavoured to remove their impetuoſity by lenity, and every other method, conſiſtent with the rectitude of nature, and the liberty of moral agents. Divine ſeverity is mitigated by infinite compaſſion, and the mild forbearance of indulgent pity, which gives delinquents convenient ſeaſon for reflection, and time to waſh away the ſtains and blemiſhes of ſin, in the tears of godly ſorrow, the means, through Chriſt, of our reconciliation, and of our acceptance with God; ſo that we indigent and and needy creatures, who have nothing but what we freely receive from the liberality of that diffuſive and munificent hand, which ſuſtains the whole creation, and keeps public communities, as well as private families, from falling into diſtraction, and therefore we cannot, on rational principles, but extol the goodneſs of Providence, and God's regard for us, in allowing us time for repentance, and not hurrying us out of this world before we are prepared for the next. Inſtead of accuſing the Deity of ſlowneſs, and the Divinity with unfaithfulneſs, we, with the warmeſt ſenſe of gratitude, ought to celebrate the divine

the divine forbearance and gratefully diſplay his univerſal benignity, who deals thus bountifully by all; is not prejudiced in favour of any. For God is no reſpecter of perſons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him and will be recompenced by him. There is now no diſtinction betwixt Jew and Gentile, but both ſtand upon equal ground ſince the preaching of the Goſpel and its glorious light ſhines upon all nations. The Lord over all, is good unto all that call upon him. The partition wall of rights and ceremonies being aboliſh'd, and the pagan ſuperſtition and idolatry deſtroyed; the Jew may join with the Gentile, and the Gentile with the Jew, and by the faith that worketh by love, offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices and holy oblations to God, who is ready to embrace ſuch with tenderneſs and affection, who are wearied with the ſlaviſh burden and gauling yoke of ſin. The ſcriptures abound with teſtimonies of this ſort, and in ſundry paſſages aſſert, that God. who is the eſſence of love and the boundleſs ſpring of goodneſs, wants not the declamations of his creatures, to diſplay the glory of his Majeſty, values no ſuperficial excellencies, or national prerogatives, but candidly reveals his will to all who cloſe with his benevolent propoſals, and are the followers of the ſincere and upright Jeſus, who is the Lord from Heaven, and our advocate with the father. *God*, ſays the Apoſtle, *ſo loved the world, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life; God ſent not his ſon into the world to condemn the world*, but to free it from thoſe calamities, in which it was before involved, *that the world might live through him.* The Apoſtle ſpeaks with aſtoniſhment, and

breaks forth into admiration, at the ſtupendous exceſs of divine love, and God's ſuperabundant grace in Chriſt, herein is love, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his ſon to be a propitiation for our ſins, and not for our ſins only, but for the ſins of the whole world*; that is all mankind, by the death and ſufferings of Chriſt, are put under the means of grace, and into a ſtate of ſalvation, ſo that all being thus redeemed from the miſerable effects of ſin, may, if induſtry be not wanting, ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus. No words can be more expreſs, or texts more explicit, or more eaſily underſtood, than thoſe that declare the divine placability, or that God's love for man was antecedent to the death of Chriſt, and not owing to any external cauſe, but purely to his internal diſpoſition, to reconcile penſive criminals to himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them. From what has been already offered, it is obvious to perſons of thought, that the God of all mercy, the firſt and principal mover in our redemption, was inclinable from the beginning, to ſhew favour to mournful offenders, that they who were children of diſobedience, might not be overwhelmed with the agonies of grief, or ſwallowed up in overmuch ſorrow. For what man loſt by apoſtacy, and forfeited by rebellion, may not be reſtored to him by the mercy of God, in and through our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. The father is ſo replete with goodneſs, that he neither withdraws nor withholds his bleſſings from any, but ſuch as ſpurn at his admonitions, or ſtrive to fruſtrate the grand deſigns of providence, of which no thing can be more abſurd, nor betray a greater degree of infatuation, than to fight againſt God, who is the

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protector of good men, and guards them againſt all thoſe ſnares and alarming attacks which we in this valley of tears, are every moment incident to, and ſhould be foiled with, was it not for the divine ſovereignty, and God's ſpecial care of us, and particular regard for us. For he that is touched with our infirmities, is too ſenſible of our weakneſs, to forſake ſuch as cannot help themſelves, or to increaſe their miſeries, but he exhibits the pure feelings of nature, and affords them ſufficient ſtrength in their undecided ſtruggles with temporal and ſpiritual engagements, to keep them from falling, and to preſent them faultleſs with exceeding joy, before the omnipreſent and omniſcient judge, which ſurveys every part of the globe, and leaves no vacuity or empty ſpace which he does not fill. For he who is about our beds, and ſpieth out all our ways, is ever preſent with us, to heal all the ſickneſſes, and diſtempers of our depraved minds, if we will follow his preſcriptions, whoſe eyes are like a flame of fire, beholding the evil and the good, and knows what remedies are beſt and moſt requiſite and needful for them. Meditations of this ſublime quality, and of that never abſent being, will, if properly attended to, make us not only cleave to that God who will diſpel that deadly gloom, which darkens the ſouls of the afflicted, and renders their hearts the ſeats of horror and diſtraction, but they will be filled with chearfulneſs, and with ſuch ſpiritual ſenſations, as no being beſides him can give, whoſe power knows no reſtraint, and which no created being can intercept. What ſcruple can then remain to diſguſt us, or which of the divine perfections do not miniſter grounds of peace, and reaſon for ſweet

conſolation; and therefore would ſuch as ſuffer hardſhips, and live in the want of many things, have recourſe to infinite patience, and ſeek the Lord while he may be found, they would find grace and mercy in the time of trouble, and be ſhelter'd and defended by the divine arm. (*) For the Lord is a ſun and ſhield, and

(*) As all the glories of another world are ſignified to us by the pleaſures of this, ſo the nature of God, by his gracious condeſcention to our capacities, is ſignified to us by a likeneſs of our own: The more familiar things are to us which God uſes, to this purpoſe the more proper they are to teach us what he intends by them. So that thoſe members which we aſcribe to God, rather denote his viſible operations to us, than his inviſible nature, and ſignify that God doth ſome works like thoſe which men do, by the aſſiſtance of thoſe organs of their bodies; ſo the wiſdom of God is called his eye, becauſe he knows that with his mind which we ſee with our eyes; the efficiency of God, is called his hand and arm, becauſe, as we act with our hands, ſo doth God with his power; the divine efficacies are ſignified by his eyes and ears, by which we underſtand his omniſcience; by his face, the manifeſtation of his favour; by his mouth, the revealation of his will; by his noſtrils, the acceptance of our prayers; by his bowels, the tenderneſs of his compaſſion; by his heart, the ſincerity of his affections; by his hand, the ſtrength of his power; by his feet, the ubiquity of his preſence. In this, God deſigns inſtruction and comfort: By his eyes, he ſignifies his watchfulneſs over us; by his ears, his readineſs to hear the cries of the oppreſſed, and the complaints of the miſerable; by his arm, ability to deſtroy his enemies, and to ſave his people. All theſe perfections are attributed to God, to ſignify divine actions, which he doth without bodily organs, as we do with them. Whatſoever is perfect or excellent, is attributed to him, but nothing that ſavours of imperfection. The heart is attributed to him, it being the principal of all vital actions, to ſignify the life that God hath in himſelf; watchful and diſcerning eyes, not ſleepy and ſlothful ones; a mouth to reveal his will, not to take in food: To eat and ſleep are never aſcribed to him, nor to any of thoſe parts that are intended to prepare and tranſmit nouriſhment to the ſtomach and bowels, under that, but as they are ſignificant of compariſon, but only thoſe parts are aſcribed to him whereby we acquire knowledge, as eyes and ears, the organs of learning and wiſdom; or to communicate to others, as the mouth and tongue are the inſtruments of ſpeaking, and not of taſting, ſo that when we read of God's eyes, we ſhould conceive of his omniſcience; of his hand, his power; of his ſitting, his immutability; of his throne, his ma-

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the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, and love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. The pſalmiſt, convinced of divine ſecurity, in an elevated empire of mind, which gives ſuperiority of ſoul over all the terrible commotions and tumultuous ſcenes of perplexity, ſays, in the nervous and affecting words of truth, *O Lord God of Hoſts, bleſſed is the Man that truſteth in thee, and maketh much of thy law.* The ſteadfaſt perſuaſion of which, will make the contrite to rejoice, and be heartily glad of thoſe happy opportunities, which God hath graciouſly bleſſed them with, to ſilence the diſquietting agitations, and the bitter and ſecret ſtings of unbelief. Theſe forcible motives to filial obedience, are ſpurs to final perſeverance, when actuated by the ſpirit of God, and are enough to mollify the moſt inflexible, and change the moſt unyeilding diſpoſitions, for others more becoming our preſent condition, and our ſole dependance upon God, who never deceives his people nor breaks

jeſty, and conceive of him as ſurmounting, not only the greatneſs of bodies, but the ſpiritual excellency of the moſt dignified and exalted creature, ſomething ſo perfect, ſo great and ſpiritual, as nothing can be concieved higher, mightier and purer, If then our capacities cannot explain his nature, our weaker ſenſes cannot form his image: Can we draw the figure of our ſouls, or expreſs that part of ourſelves wherein we are like to God? Can we extend this to any being, or divide it into parts? How then can we deal ſo with God whence the draught of our ſouls was taken, which is infinitely more ſpiritual than the higheſt rank and order of all created beings. Corporeal things cannot repreſent ſpiritual things. There is no proportion betwixt them. God is a ſimple, immenſe, eternal and inviſible deity, and not only imperceptible to mortal ſight, but alſo to immortal angels. They cannot penetrate his perfections, nor execute his hidden deſigns. We who have but little knowledge of ourſelves. it is no wonder we are ſo ignorant of God, and the hidden myſteries and operations of his providence.

in upon any of thoſe laws which he has unchangeably eſtabliſhed for our guidance and direction thro' this tempeſtuous ſea to the ſerene manſion of peace and uninterruption: we ought then to ſuſpend our judgment and not to be ſo urgent, and vehement in our requeſts, but patiently tarry the Lord's leiſure, who will according to his promiſe, fulfill all the good pleaſure of his will and the work of faith with power.

The Lord, ſays St. Peter, *is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs*, for one day with the Lord is as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day; but the Lord is long ſufferance, and not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance, and be free'd from thoſe terrors, which were occaſioned by making ſhipwreck of faith and of a good conſcience; and though the divine operations are unſeen, and God often hides himſelf, yet he never deviates from his determinations of making men holy, or of fitting and preparing them for happineſs. This infinite clemency does, that after the burden and heat of the day is over, and our warfare is accompliſh'd, we may be eternally united to him, in the ſacred bands of love and find a peaceable retreat and a quiet receptacle in glory. The kind intentions of providence are to fix our minds on that being, who once abode on earth, but now reſides in heaven, and in us by his ſpirit, to correct the ſickly and feeble powers of nature, that we may abound in every good word and work, and ſhine in all our heavenly ſplendour. Since then the divinity is thus mindful of us, we whoſe faculties are thus limited and confined to this narrow ſphere, ſhould learn to improve this amiable and humbling grace of humility,

and

and not pry into the divine ſecrets, by reaſon of the many intermediate events, which are totally concealed from us, and too intricate for us to unravel, or human intelligence to trace.

For whatever is above the ſphere of angels, can never be within the reach and compaſs of ſhort ſighted men: God's people will be happy in the end, tho' his diſpenſations are ſo obſcure, (*) and his ways ſo very myſterious that we can only reſign and wonder, and with profound ſilence adore. God maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind. We who have taſted of his liberality and of his kind munificent hand, have no reaſon to be terrified and frighted at the divine delays, which are intended to lower our pride, and check the haughtineſs of our tempers, and the preſumptuouſneſs of our enquiries. For whatever our imperfect ideas ſuggeſt, or we vainly imagine, God, who is an inmaterial ſpirit, and is eternal and immutable in his eſſence, cannot, conſiſtent with theſe or any of his other attributes and perfections, be ſuppoſed to have altered his plan, but only defers the execution of his threats, and fulfilling of his promiſes, to exerciſe the faith and patience of good men, and afford the vicious and incredulous leiſure for conſideration and time for

(*) Who can unfold God's attributes, which are not confined in their unity, not divided in their number, nor ſeparated in their qualities, but his eſſence. He is not only wiſe, but wiſdom; and not only lives, but is life. We cannot ſpeak of ſome attributes, without diſtinction: Of wiſdom and power, without ſeeming oppoſition; juſtice and mercy are of the ſame divine nature, and cannot be ſeparated, but in our thoughts. He is eternal, without ſucceſſion; and there is no fore nor after knowledge in God, but he ſees all things at one view, This knowledge is too wonderful. To believe no more than we underſtand, is abſurd, and proceeds from our ignorance of God's nature and of our own.

reflexion.

reflexion. It is the unchangeable deſire of heaven to forward the converſion and ſalvation of intelligent beings, by methods ſuited to their intelligent nature, as moſt likely to operate upon their affections, to free them from the bondage of ſin, and reſtore them to that happy ſituation which they loſt, by their degeneracy, and continual oppoſition to God's precepts.

No time then ſhould be waſted, nor any convenient ſeaſon ſlipped, but all poſſible means uſed which God has wiſely made choice of, to recover men from everlaſting perdition, and to train them up for uninterrupted bliſs and the glories of Chriſt's ſpiritual kingdom. If we induſtriouſly purſue this buſineſs, and anſwer the end of our evangelical calling, we ſhall gain that ſafe harbour, where the moſt violent hurricanes cannot reach, nor faithleſs friends make us afraid, nor endanger our ſecurity. The ſouls of the righteous are in the hands of God; no torment ſhall touch them, while under the divine inſpection, and care of the divine guardian. Thus I have proved from holy ſcripture, that we can have no confidence or reliance upon any beſides God. In order to maintain my aſſertion, I ſhall firſt obſerve, the uncomfortable and wretched ſtate of man, from the many fatal diſeaſes and cruel impoſitions of the crafty and ſundry reiterated ways of deciet, which he cannot poſſibly avoid, without the uncontroulable interpoſitions of providence. Secondly, the peace and happineſs of man under the ſovereign power and defence of the moſt high. Firſt, man conſider'd in himſelf, or ſeparate from God, is of all creatures the moſt helpleſs, and his condition ſo pitiable, that it can hardly be deſcribed; as ſubject to numerous calamaties without,

out, and various putrifying ſores within, which he, with all his ſagacity could neither foreſee, nor by any human ſkill prevent. In his ſtate of infancy, tender as the vernal ſhoots, and like them eaſily nipped in the bud, are left to the care of ſuch, as too often betray their truſt, and treat thoſe innocent harmleſs babes as beſt ſuit their own intereſt, and what tends to enrich and advance themſelves.

This but too often happens, when infants fall into the hands of villains, or ſuch hard hearted ruffians as regard not the tears of the widow, nor the piercing cries of the fatherleſs, provided they can but raiſe their own fortunes, tho' it be on the ruin of thoſe they have ſolemnly ſworn to protect againſt the barbarous devices, and ſubtle ſchemes of the deſigning. Should theſe inoffenſive creatures arrive to riper years, and the opening of the underſtanding, and be buſily engaged in human affairs, they are not only expoſed to the by-paths of diſſimulation and hypocriſy, but alſo to the event of time and chance, and the caprice of fickle inconſtant creatures, who make men great and ſmall in a moment, and ſerve none any longer then they can ſerve themſelves.

Men who thus purſue ſelfiſh meaſures, and leave God out of their ſchemes, are inſecure and diſſatisfied in all their purſuits, and will, if not blinded with avarice, or the fallacious lure of ambition, be obliged from human weakneſs, and the injuries received from others, to cry out, Help Lord, for vain is the help of man; wherein is he to be truſted to, or to be accounted of. Men generally ſooth us in proſperity, and abondon us in the dolorous trials of adverſity, when advice is moſt needed, and aſſiſtance moſt wanted; and inſtead

of

of adminiſtering the cordial drops of conſolation, are more inclinable to cenſure our conduct, and to upbraid us in our miſery, though they themſelves can neither mitigate our afflictions, nor ſupport or ſuccour us in our diſtreſs: Or if they come to mourn with us, or to condole with us in our miſery, they like Job's comforters will grieve him who is already grieved, and vex him who is already wounded. For when overwhelmed in the depths of trouble, ſo that we pour out our moiſture in floods of tears, and ſpend our years in ſighing; the reviving former miſcarriages, or the ſlips of an unguarded hour, will not lighten onr burdens, but be an additional weight to our ſufferings and apt to overturn our afflicted ſpirits.

To this wretched condition are men reduced, by ſo wandering in the dark, and without God's direction, that ſometimes they are ſeized with horror, and can find nothing to diſſipate their fears, or make their conſciences placid, and its dictates awfully ſerene.

For amidſt the multiplicity of objects which preſent themſelves to our ſight, and the appetites they are to gratify, are ſo vehement in their requeſt, that we know not which to comply with, keeps the mind in great agitation, and in much ſorrow of heart. But ſhould the choice repay their labours, and the difficulties which they have met with, there can be no real enjoyment in things ſo fugative in their nature, and of ſo ſhort and uncertain a ſtay, that they may be taken from us, or we from them, and ſtripp'd of our earthly covering before the dawn of another day, or the night be ſhrouded in darkneſs; For green and flouriſhing

riſhing as the tree may be to day, tomorrow it may be cut down, dried up and withered. Thus brittle are our frames, and delicate is our compoſition, and the tender fibres of which it is formed, ſubject us to numberleſs mortal diſeaſes, and various kinds of deaths, which e'er long will conclude this ſcene, and lodge us in that dark repoſitory where the monarch and the ſlave lie undiſtinguiſh'd in the duſt.

The ſeeds of mortality are bred in us, and the body is a prey to all diſtempers, from the torturing ſtone, to the dying conſumption, out of which thoſe noxious and infections weeds grow; they, for want of due pruning, ſo amazingly ſhoot forth and increaſe that they cannot poſſibly be reckoned; nor have their malignant or poiſonous qualities abated by any other power than that which none can reſiſt, nor are able to undermine or overthrow.

There are other ſorts of maladies frail mortals are obnoxious to, and of a more grevious and affecting nature; I mean thoſe of the mind, which ſometimes overſet the brighteſt underſtanding, and cauſe ſuch diſcord and riot among the unruly appetites, as deprive men of all true peace, and the uſe of their beſt and nobleſt faculties: This, of all diſorders, carries with it the worſt of torture, and ſo diſtracts the human heart, that it is infinitely harder to bear, and much more difficult to cure, than any corporeal diſtemper whatſoever: Take away preſent pain, and the body returns to health, and enjoys its native freedom; but the ſoul is pained with melancholy thoughts, and the fear of what is to come, which gives it ſuch a diſguſt

to life, as renders its preſent condition uncomfortable, and all things in it unpalatable irkſome and nauſeous.

Such a diſeaſed, ſickly ſtate of mind, contracted by frequent contradictions of conſcience, is one of the bittereſt ingredients in life, and one of the princapal things that render men moſt unlike themſelves, and frightful ſpectacles to others. How uneaſy muſt ſuch perſons be as often call over their ſins, and ruminate on their paſt follies, at a certain period of life hardly unavoidable; how perplexing are theſe conſiderations on the ſeveral vices knowingly and deliberately committed againſt conviction, and the cleareſt arguments to the contrary.

Whilſt under theſe ſevere reprehenſions, we are laſhed with the cords of vanity, and the ſtings of a wounded ſpirit; and are expoſed to the wrath of that Deity, whom we have reproachfully provoked, and whoſe indignation reſteth upon ſinners; ſo that whatever ſatan or his buſy emmiſaries ſuggeſt, the rambling from one place to another, or ſhifting about for new diverſions, will not aſſuage our grievances, unleſs we could run from ourſelves, and leave our uneaſineſſes behind. A dark cloud ſo overſhadows us, and ſo intercepts the divine light, that it will eclipſe our brighteſt ideas, and make every employment dull, and the moſt polite entertainment gloomy. Search this mighty wonderful globe, ranſack the bowels of the earth, and pick out ſome of its choiceſt treaſures, and what men admire and value moſt, they are but glittering movements which may pleaſe the eye, but can never ſatisfy the heart, nor pacify our internal diſquietudes. No terrene delights can moderate our deſires, nor the greateſt

greateſt affluence leſſen that load, which ſo heavily oppreſſes our minds, and ſo weighs down the ſoul, that it cannot ſoar aloft; but it muſt abide in darkneſs, 'till God is pleaſed to enlighten it, and raiſe it to a brighter and more heavenly flame. Heaps of gold nor the largeſt poſſeſſions, cannot heal the ſtab of private rebuke, nor ſilence the unremitted torrent of guilt, nor fruſtrate the artifices and projects of the crooked ſerpent. Vain is the ornament of apparel, taſteleſs the fruits of the earth, and unpleaſant the lights of heaven.

The landſcape has no delight, the change of ſeaſons no allurements, the ſtately pile has no more admiration than the graſs that grows upon the houſe top, or the ſhrub on the barren heath: The flowers loſe their colour, the trees their verdance, the garden its agreeable retreat, and the fields their ſollitude; all is haunted, and embittered by the demon of melancholly care. The images of growing ſorrow beſiege the mind, earth can can yield no ſatisfaction, where heaven does not extend its rays, and the chearing beams of ſpiritual light. No paſt fruition can allay inward diſturbances, no outward ſplendor amuſe the intellectual eye, nor appeaſe the ſharp ſtruggles and reiterated conteſts within, between reaſon and appetite. A wounded ſpirit turns our ſweeteſt enjoyments into the bittereſt, moſt unpalatable draughts, and moſt dreadful ſenſations and painful apprehenſions of what is to come: Fear ſtruck Belſhazzar at his feaſt, and in the height of his mirth, and probably when leaſt thought of, made his knees tremble and ſmite one againſt another.

Whoever

Whoever meditates on man's condition, either of body or mind, without God's peculiar regard and over-ruling providence, may percieve the wretchedneſs of both: For men are ſeized with ſuch diſtempers as imcommode the fleſh, and ſo disfigures the bodily part, as deſtroys that beautiful ſymmetry, but the mind is infinitely more harraſſed and unſpeakably more out of order: Many have their notions ſo ſhattered, and heads full of ſuch frightful ſpectres as never did, nor can exiſt any where but in their own brains, and the wild rovings and frenzies of the imaginations. The whole ſtate of man is but ſhew, and they that make the grandeſt appearance and moſt conſpicuous part of it, are no more exempt from trouble and daily ſore complaints, than the moſt forlorn and contemptible object.

Nay our afflictions are often ſo grievous, and our misfortunes ſo numerous, that they cannot be noticed without horror, nor felt without inexpreſſible grief, and bitter anguiſh of mind: By ſetting up for ourſelves, and acting as it were independent of God; we have no ſecurity in any thing, nor can we promiſe ourſelves ſucceſs, even in the moſt laudable and commendable undertaking, without the divine concurrence, and the aſſiſtance of God's all ſupporting aid. But if we keep cloſe to God, God will keep cloſe to us, and be a light unto our path, and a lanthorn unto our feet, and be our guide even unto death. The path of the juſt is as ſhining light, and his foot ſtandeth on ſure ground, where all is ſecure by the all-wiſe and all-powerful architect of heaven and earth, whom none can, with all their ſhill, uncloſe,

unclose. I ſhall now wave all farther thoughts on the miſery and unhappineſs of man, when left to himſelf, and conſider, in the ſecond place, the ſecure and bleſſed ſtate of man, under the divine direction and guidance of God's providence. Man of all creatures in the creation, is the moſt ſhiftleſs of all beings, and is as unable to ward off thoſe diſtreſſes which he cannot poſſibly avoid, but by flying to the arms of him, and taking ſhelter under his banner, who formed the light and created darkneſs, and beſtows joy and gladneſs to the broken in heart. We therefore muſt act a very imprudent part, if we ſtand unreſolved, and neglect to gain the friendſhip of that being, who in the worſt of dangers, will either deliver us out of them, or comfortably ſupport us under them. For if God undertakes our cauſe, we ſhall dwell in the utmoſt ſecurity, *and be able to joy and rejoice in the God of our ſalvation. Light is ſown to the righteous, and joyful gladneſs to the upright in heart, with his right hand he ſhall cover them, and with his holy arm protect them.* This diſcovers the ignorance and audacity of Man, to contend with an omnipotent God. *who by his ſtrength ſetteth faſt the mountains, and is girded about with power, who only can keep us from thoſe diſaſters which throws body and mind into diſorder, and into the deepeſt ſlumber. The Lord is my ſtrength and my ſong,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and he is become my ſalvation, Thou, O God, haſt been my refuge in the day of my trouble, unto thee, O my ſtrength will I ſing, for thou O God, art my refuge, and my merciful God.* His power is ſo moved, by the flowing ſtreams of benificence,

and

and the invariable ſprings of goodneſs, that the thirſty ſoul cannot crave beyond what God can give, nor aſk more than he is able to beſtow; ſo that however ſtraitened in ourſelves, we cannot be ſtraitened in God, who liberally opens the granaries of heaven, and out of theſe celeſtial ſtore-houſes, ſupplies every rational being, and every living thing with plentiouſneſs. We, after ſuch inſtances of generoſity, cannot without betraying want of faith, and preferring the favour of an indigent, and neceſſituous worm, before the favour of that wiſe and beneficent ruler, who governs himſelf and all his dependant creatures; but the pure and diſintereſted maxims of reaſon, which always correſpond with righteouſneſs, and the decrees of infinite juſtice. Former as well as preſent experience, confirms, this reviving and animating truth, reminds us of our ſecurity, and that we are in the hands of an indulgent father, and not of an implacable and revengeful tyrant, whoſe will, takes the lead of all his proceedings, and of all his arbitrary and unjuſtifiable actions. This, therefore muſt argue want of diſcernment, to place our affections on any other being, beſides that unalterable and eternal Deity, who is Lord of all our time, and in whoſe hands, are the iſſues of life and death; and who can, by one act of his will, add years to days, or cut them off at his pleaſure. He whoſe years fail not but keeps our ſouls in ſafety, is now what he always was, and will be everlaſting ſo, after this wonderful fabrick is burnt up and mingled with the devouring flames, where every thing is conſumed and laid in ruinous heaps of aſhes.

Theſe

Theſe immutable and eternal truths, were they interwoven in our deſires, and in all our inclinations; (*) they would enlarge our notions of providence, and revive us in our darkeſt moments, and in the moſt diſtreſſing circumſtances, ſo that be our miſeries ever ſo intolerable, or our ſufferings ever ſo long, before the Deity comes to our help, we have no cauſe for deſpondency, as if He had totally forgotten us, and we were out of his remembrance. For our ſecurity, lies in God's promiſes, and in the words of that faithful being, who hates every ſpecie of deceit, and does not ſay one thing, and mean another, to perplex, and miſlead his people, or to fill them with doubts, or to create evil ſurmiſes. For when Pharaoh had muſter'd his mighty army, and commanded them to follow and deſtroy the diſtreſſed Iſraelites; God did not interpoſe in their behalf, tho'

(*) For Chriſtianity is a republication of natural religion, adapted to the preſent circumſtances of mankind, and intended to promote piety and virtue. It inſtructs mankind in the moral ſyſtem of the world; that it is a work of the infinitely perfect Being, and under his government; that virtue is his law, and that he will finally judge mankind in righteouſneſs, and render to all, according to their works, in a future ſtate, and, which is very material, it teaches natural religion, in its genuine ſimplicity, free from thoſe ſuperſtitions with which it was totally corrupted, and under which, it was in a manner loſt. Revelation is farther, an author or a true publication of natural religion, and affords the evidence of teſtimony for the truth of it. Indeed the miracles and prophecies recorded in ſcripture, were intended to prove a particular diſpenſation of providence the redemption of the world, by a Meſſiah. But this does not hinder, but they may always prove God's general providence in the world, as our moral governour and judge, and they evidently do prove it, becauſe this character of the author of nature, is neceſſarily connected with, and implied in that particular revealed diſpenſation of things. It is likewiſe continually taught expreſsly, and inſiſted on by thoſe perſons, who wrought the miracles, and delivered the prophecies, ſo that indeed natural religion, ſeems as much proved by the ſcripture revelation, as it would have been, had the deſign of revelation been nothing elſe than to prove it.

an enemy purſued his people behind, and the ſea obſtructed their paſſage before, 'till near that tremendous watery gulph: Thus God dealt with his ſervants, not to drive them to diſtraction, nor to grieve their oppreſſed ſpirits, but to exhibit the greatneſs of his majeſty, and render his authority more conſpicuous, in the preſervation of the Hebrews, and total overthrow and deſtruction of the Egyptians. We ought, then, not to murmur, nor to be diſcontented under our troubles, which are permitted as trials of our faith and patience, to make us more reſigned to God in all holy obedience. *And, therefore, wait on the Lord, be of good Courage, and he will ſtrengthen thine Heart: For in the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength.* Theſe expreſſions deſcribe God's concern for his people, from the earlieſt commencement of time to this preſent hour, and that he has never neglected the care of ſuch as looked, with ſingleneſs of heart, to him who is ever ready to aſſiſt the miſerable, and reſcue them from the fury and malice of their implacable foes. Men, indeed, ſometimes employ their power to baſe and unworthy purpoſes, to avaricious and ſelfiſh views, becauſe of their wickedneſs, and the naughtineſs of their hearts; but God, whoſe wiſdom is excited by love, and the ſympathetic bowels of pity, can never uſe it ill, becauſe of his righteouſneſs; nor unſkilfully, nor unſeaſonably, becauſe of his wiſdom, by which he governs himſelf, and directs all his intelligent creatures, And tho' we are ſurrounded with ſnares, and ſo cloſely beſet with temptations, and that of various ſorts, yet, if we place our truſt in God, he will arm us with the ſhield of faith, and the invulnerable breaſtplate of righteouſneſs,

which

which will render the moſt malevolent attempts vain, and the moſt artful ſchemes unſucceſsful. This is the power of our conqueſt, and the ſteadfaſtneſs of our ſeſecurity, that we are kept through faith, by the mighty power of God, unto everlaſting ſalvation.

It is clear, even to demonſtration, perſons that continue inflexible, and will not hearken to the voice of God, are unacquainted with infinite bleſſedneſs, and have never felt that peace in themſelves, which God inwardly ſpeaks to his people, and to all ſuch as have overcome the world, and live in hopes and expectations of an happy hereafter.

Were men ſenſible of that recompence which God has in reſerve for all thoſe who firſt ſeek his kingdom, and the righteouſneſs thereof, they would be more devout in God's ſervice, and in rendering the powers and faculties of the human ſoul, fit for that heavenly receptacle, in which dwells peace and love, and all that is ſerene and calm. Thus religiouſly exerciſing our ſeveral talents, which are the free unmerited gift of God, will be a prologue to our everlaſting day, in thoſe immence mazes, and the inconceivable circles of eternity, where no thief can break in, to annoy or diſturb its inhabitants. The way to arrive at that happy day, is acting up to the dignity of our high calling, and not like thoſe wild ſavages, who are better pleaſed with ſuch baubles as are more fit for brutes than men, endued with divine intelligence and capable of uſing that noble faculty. When we contemplate the divine and moral excellencies, and adhere to the pacific terms of the goſpel, our hearts are then at eaſe, and a divine calm ſo overſpreads our ſouls, as reconciles us to every ſtate, and to

all the difficult, and perplexing concerns of mortal life. We, then, who not only enjoy temporal mercies, but are alſo favoured with goſpel privileges, ſhould throw off all thoſe incumbrances, which are ſuch clogs to our ſouls as hinder them from ſoaring aloft, and making them cleave to debaſing and defiling objects. Theſe ſordid impediments being removed, *by the mighty power of him, who led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto Men, not to bury them in the earth, nor to hide them in a napkin,* but to uſe them in mortifying their evil deeds, and in ſilencing the clamours of envy, that love and friendſhip may prevail, and unity and concord abound among us, and among all civil and religious communities. Becauſe we are aſſured by him, who is truth itſelf, and the mirrour of unmixed goodneſs, that none will be heirs of his kingdom, but ſuch as live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, and perform all thoſe duties, which conſtitute the whole of religion, and that before the day of grace be over, leaſt our frail bodies fall to the ground, and into the womb of conſuming time, when we probably never thought of it. Profane men in theſe days of ours, lull themſelves into a dead calm, more fatal than a ſtorm, hoping to enjoy the recompence, while they refuſe to uſe thoſe ordinances, which God hath appointed to obtain it, not conſidering the ſmalleſt offence, if wilfully committed, or perverſely continued in, will render their deplorable condition unbearable, and impoſſible to be ſecure. No man can promiſe himſelf, or others, a ſafe paſſage to the world of pure ſpirits, if the wardrobe of righteouſneſs be wanting, or the means of converſion neglected, nothing elſe will make up thoſe deficiencies, or be equivalent for that egregi-

ous

ous contempt, which is poured on the uſeful and neceſſary inſtitutions of God. Do not, therefore, part with your underſtanding, nor liſten to the perfidiouſneſs of the wicked, whatever ſpecious arguments, or plauſible pretences they may offer, to ſeduce you, and ruin your immortal ſouls. For God cannot delight in ſuch as take no delight in him, by the ſacred employment of prayer, and the conſtant exerciſe of that, and all other ſublime and rational duties.

The ſtrict obſervance of theſe commands, and the profitable rules of temperance and chaſtity, and univerſal love and charity, will keep off thoſe miſcheivous and noxious evils, to which we are here expoſed, in this gloomy valley of tears, and region of tumult and horror. In order to keep off thoſe miſeries, and the direful conſequences of our miſcarriages, let us, without mental reſervation, be as induſtrious in the ways of God, and in the worſhip of the moſt high, as the frailty of nature will permit. If we thus devoutly act, we ſhall be led by omnipotence to the temple of God, the native element of holy ſouls, where the righteous live like angels of light, in communion and fellowſhip with one another; ſo that, if we act conſiſtent with reaſon, which is the candle of the Lord, and the precepts of revelation, we ſhall be introduced into that aſſembly, where truth reigns in it's ſimplicity, without any of thoſe corrupt gloſſes, to make it ſpeak what it does not, and what it never intended.

The better to correct thoſe abuſes, and rouſe drouſy mortals out of their ſecurity, and that horrid ſtupidity, in which they are involved, and cannot poſſibly extricate themſelves, we muſt uſe the breath of fervent

prayer, and earneſtly implore the divine forgiveneſs, that our ſins may be cancelled, and our pardon ſealed in heaven, *before we go hence and be no more ſeen.* The ſteady performance of which, will enforce thoſe rational and laudable addreſſes, and bring us to delight in holy meditations, and to admire the wondrous things of God's law. And, therefore, I ſhall not only open and enlarge upon this duty of prayer, of pouring out our ſouls before God, but alſo recommend to your peruſal, the ſacred ſcriptures, and the ſerious obſervation of the rules and directions contained in them, as the means to eſtabliſh you in this, and every other good work.

I ſhall begin firſt with this duty of prayer, but the prayer that I mean, is that which proceeds from indigence, and our moſt urgent neceſſities, and that none can furniſh us with any ſupplies, nor any one temporal or ſpiritual bleſſing, but that all ſufficient God, in whom all fullneſs dwells; becauſe prayer doth not conſiſt in ſmooth, or well turned periods, but in the real ſenſe, and ſincere deſires of the ſoul. This is that diſpoſition of ſpirit, which can only be agreeable to him, who is a pure and perfect ſpirit, without which, how elegant ſoever the language of prayer may be, it is but lifeleſs, and of no more account with God, then the noiſe of ſounding braſs, or the tinkling of a ſymbal. The devotion of the heart is allowed by all, who underſtand the nature of this duty, to be the moſt eligible, and moſt agreeable to God's word. Let me then perſuade you, to lift up your deſires to God, *and to ſeek him with your whole heart,* be petitioners to him for every bleſſing.

Prayer

Prayer increaſes our ſteadfaſtneſs in God, who gives life and vivacity to all our actions, and raiſes the fire of holy love, and the breathings of pure affections, ſo that if we conſidered our own intereſt, we ſhould be more deſirous of him, who is ever mindful of us, and whom we ought infinitely to prefer before all the gay and pompous ſcenes of vanity. In this diſpoſition, and ſolemn frame of mind, we ſee the littleneſs of every thing but God, and the welcome refreſhments of his grace, and what tends to advance his glory, which is the happineſs and perfection of man. *Return, then, unto thy reſt, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. Thou haſt made me to hear thy voice, which was ſweet; and thy loving kindneſs, which is better than life itſelf. For when I ſat in darkneſs, I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me out of all my fears. I will ſhew forth his loving kindneſs in the morning, and his faithfulneſs in the evening.* Let us, then, cultivate the eternal ſpirit of devotion, *and ſeek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, for the Lord is good to all, his mercy is everlaſting, and his truth endureth throughout all generations.*

Let us, then, leave over-anxious man, perplexed with vain hopes, and bewilder'd with many cares, which expire with the flux of time, and brings the monarch and the ſlave to that repoſitory, which levels all things. Let us not ſport with ſacred things, nor hold any communication with profane perſons, but lay before the Almighty our wants and manifold grievances, in the manner which he preſcribes, and the way he enjoins. *For the Father ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him.* Being thus armed with chriſtian fortitude, and the inviſible ſhield

of faith, we in the moſt unfavourable circumſtances are encouraged to hope in God, who will neither confound nor perplex us, nor make us aſhamed of our confidence. This we may be well ſatisfied of, and find much conſolation in, from the tenderneſs of God's love, which obviouſly appeared in every frown, and the glimmerings of the darkeſt night; and which we have ſo many proofs of, that we know not how to number them, nor where to begin the recital of them. *O how liberal is thy goodneſs, and extenſive are thy mercies!*

The divine ſuperintendent is ever active, and ſo agile in motion, that no moment of life paſſes unobſerved, nor accident eſcapes his watchful eye, nor the reach of his outſtretched arm. Since we can neither ſcreen ourſelves from God, nor hide any of our devices from him, we ought to walk more warrily, and to behave as thoſe who make God the object of their hope; and look on the fluttering ſcenes of mortality, as ſo many ſhades, to diſguiſe, and veil his glorious divinity, and obſtructions to our commerce with heaven. For when our ſouls are ſo bowed with grief, and with the oppreſſive weight of ſorrow, that we know not where to find redreſs, nor how to diſpoſe of ourſelves, prayer will remove our reſtleſneſs, and give ſuch vivacity to our life and ſpirits, as will make us more piouſly alert, and more chearful in all chriſtian duties. This we have a notable inſtance of, in the caſe of Hannah, the wife of Athaliah, who was a woman of a ſorrowful ſpirit, yet, ſhe, in great bitterneſs, wept ſore before the Lord, and received ſuch ſweet and durable tranquility, that her countenance was no more changed, nor her complexion no more ſad.

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To have ſuch a friend at hand, to communicate our moſt terrifying ideas, as can clear up our doubts and alleviate our troubles, is vaſtly reviving; but it is infinitely more ſo, to be permitted to diſcloſe our thoughts to God, to that good and compaſſionate Deity who only can dry up our tears, and make our hearts leap for joy, and tho'theſe moral, and divine exerciſes are ſlighted, and too often deſpiſed, yet there is an awful hour coming, which neither men, nor angels can prevent, and when only prayer makes the ſick bed eaſy, and the dying pillow comfortable. By thus feeling the divine influences, and the decays of feeble nature, we are obliged *to cry out, Lord ſave us, or we periſh eternally, and to own, that in the midſt of life, we are in death. Of whom may we ſeek for ſuccour, but of thee, O Lord, who, for our ſins, art moſt juſtly diſpleaſed, yet O Lord moſt holy, O God moſt mighty, O holy and moſt merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death. Thou knoweſt, Lord, the ſecrets of our hearts, ſhut not thy merciful ears to our prayers, but ſpare us, O Lord moſt holy, O God moſt mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou moſt worthy Judge eternal, ſuffer us not in our laſt hours, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.* When thus inwardly affected with our ſins, and the reviving rays of infinite clemency, we ſhall then haſten to the mercy ſeat, and lay our modeſt intreaties before God, who will hearken to our complaints, and will grant our humble deſires, if we aſk in faith, and with due ſubmiſſion. Not that I ſuppoſe prayer, informs the Deity, of what he was ignorant of before, nor inclines him to be more benevolent, whoſe liberality ſupercedes our requeſts, and affords us more mercies than either we deſerve,

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or can in reaſon claim. The obtaining mercies in this way, is ſo agreeable to the mind of God, that they give the ſweeteſt tincture and reliſh to all our innocent enjoyments, and ſatisfy the vehement cravings, and moſt ardent wiſhes of our ſouls. *They that thus wait on the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up as on the wings af eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint.*

Prayer carries with it, ſuch conviction, that even the moſt atheiſtical perſons, who would baniſh the belief of aGod out of the world, and out of their thoughts, are by the impulſe of reaſon, compelled to rely upon the power and providence of that God, whom they have inſolently diſowned, and vainly attempted to dethrone. But when ſuch monſters of profaneneſs, are ſeized with the horrible ſtings of conſcience, and the terrible fears of death, which generally rouſe men out of ſecurity, they forget their former vague notions, and fly immediately for ſuccour to that Deity, who is their ſureſt refuge in trouble, and only comfort in the dark, and dreary ſeaſon of affliction. And though we meet with many diſcouragements, and perplexities of different kinds, *yet will I hope in God, and truſt in the Lord Jehovah, who retaineth not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy.* So that if we continue in prayer and thankſgiving, and are not weary *of well doing*, we ſhall outride the ſtorms of time, and be conducted to that ſerene habitation, where we ſhall have no boiſterous winds, nor refractory ſpirits, to ruffle our poor minds, nor make us afraid. Would we maintain that content and ſatisfaction which renders us ſuperior to all the difficulties of life, and makes us even to rejoice

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in death, we muſt improve that happy diſpoſition, which is ſo highly extolled in holy ſcripture, by the brighteſt and moſt illuſtrious examples.

For in the ſacred books, we do not find one character of wiſdom and goodneſs, which is not diſtinguiſhed by prayer and thankſgiving, and is moſt conſpicuous in thoſe eminent and excellent perſons. The bleſſings they were favoured with, are recorded to recommend this duty to our eſteem, and their perſons to our imitation. *They looked unto the Lord and were lightened, and their faces were not aſhamed. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.* Beſides, paying that homage to him who is as good as he is great; we, as the followers of the holy Jeſus, ſhould, in purſuance of his commands, offer up our ſpiritual ſacrifices to God, believing that whatſoever we aſk of the Father, we ſhall receive, through the mediation of the Son. God does not accept our petitions, as coming directly from us, but as preſented to him by *Chriſt, who is the mediator betwixt God, and ſinful Man.* By means of Chriſt's mediatoral office, the treaſures of heaven, are opened, and we are aſſured by the word of him, who is truth itſelf, that we ſhall be reinſtated in thoſe high privileges, and the glorious liberty of the ſons of God. *The captain of our ſalvation,* not only enjoins this duty of prayer, but he himſelf inforces it, by his own example that it might not be held in contempt, nor ſhamefully neglected.

In order to prevent this egregious omiſſion, our Lord has conſercrated a new and living way to the throne of God in the holieſt, wither Chriſt, as our high preiſt, is entered, *not into the holy place made with hands, which*

are figures of the true, but into heaven itſelf, there to appear as our advocate, in the preſence of God, for us. And therefore be not anxiouſly careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving let your requeſt be known unto God. This is the nobleſt employment of our thoughts, and moſt advantageous and beneficial to our ſouls, and to our bodies.

We, who have not one faculty, either of body or of mind, abſolutely in our own hands, or at our own diſpoſal, ſhould ſuffer nothing to ſeperate us from God, or to alienate our affections from him, whoſe friendſhip can only be ſecured by faith and repentance, and daily converſe with him by prayer, and the conſtant performance of that, and all other divine and moral duties. Which leads me in the ſecond place, to conſider the obligations we are under, to read, and meditate on the holy ſcriptures, not to ſtock the head with notions, nor meer fruitleſs ſpeculations; but to recover the practice of ſuch virtues, as naturally tend to inform the judgement, and to recover and encourage virtue and obedience.

The ſcriptures reveal precepts for onr inſtruction, and rules ſufficient for our direction, till we, in a certain degree, are perfect, as our father in heaven is perfect. They have ſome peculiarities, which are ſo ſtrong, that they cannot be figured by words, ſome melting ſenſations and ſurprizing beauties, that cannot be drawn to the life, by all the art of oratory, or the captivating power of language. *They are joys unſpeakable and full of glory.* There are ſome of God's attributes, which are not the objects of our deſires, but of our deepeſt awe, and profoundeſt veneration, ſuch as his eternity

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and immenſity, omnipotence and immutability; but his moral perfections, his holineſs, and univerſal charity, and marvellous condeſcenſion, and benevolent diſpoſition, which are clearly ſeen in his word, theſe we are concerned with, and indiſpenſably required to imitate. But ſome perſons are ſo highly opiniated and ſo horribly tainted with pride, the deadly poiſon of the ſoul, imagine the oracles of Greece and Rome, and eloquent diſcourſes of philoſophers, are more judiciouſly formed to perfect the human mind, than the wiſe and wholſome preſcriptions of God's word.

This conceit proceeds from groſs ignorance, and the concluſion of an inflexible determination. For the doctrines which are above the ken, or the reach of human intelligence, are only revealed in the divine volume, but all thoſe rules of moral conduct, which are abſolutely neceſſary to be believed, and punctually obſerved, are at ſundry times repeated, and diſtinctly laid down in them. So that, if ſuch as read God's word, are not profited by it, nor receive no inſtruction from it, the fault is wholly in themſelves, and owing to the want of due attention. They did not conſider the end, and ultimate deſign of its publication, but only read the word for amuſement, or to be acquainted with the revolutions, and aſtoniſhing viciſitudes of providence, or with the riſe and fall of kingdoms, and ſometimes to bad purpoſes, to raiſe groundleſs ſuſpicions, to be qualified to wrangle and dextriouſly to cavil. When this is really the caſe, and men only read to pleaſe their fancies, it's no wonder ſuch are ſceptical, and tormented with racking fears, which ſo diſtreſs and harraſs human minds that they know not what to do, nor where to find any relief,

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We, by ſubmiſſively conſidering and piouſly meditatting on the divine oracles, ſhall, by the energy and efficacy of that ſpirit, which is the unqueſtionable author of them, diſcern how infinitely preferable they are to any human compoſition, or the moſt conciſe and accurate work of men's compiling. They are ſo adapted to our depraved natures, and the ſanguine expectations of ſincere penitents, that nothing can equal them, or ſtand in any competition with them. We, then, in this fluctuating ſtate, in which every thing is in motion, and continues not long in one ſtay, but moves in the circles of uncertaintainty; ſuch a guide as the ſcriptures, are needful, to remind us of our ſickly and unſettled abode, and that all our enquiries and reſearches after happineſs, in this chequer'd life, will abundantly prove we labour'd in vain, and ſpent our time for naught. This we are convinced of, from long experience, and the tireſome journies, and unſatisfactory purſuits after true felicity, that nothing can free the mind from racking diſquietude, or the inward agonies of grief, but that all-powerful God, who over-rules the inclinations, and evil actions of men, and often makes their miſchievious efforts, the inſtruments of procuring, for thoſe they envy, a much more agreeable, and much happier condition.

Would we be protected by the Almighty, and ſecured from the greateſt dangers, we muſt avoid the fatal inticements of ſenſe, and ſhine in the armour of righteouſneſs, and the image of our dear redeemer, that we may adorn the goſpel of God, by the ſacred ſplendour of our lives, and by an heavenly converſation.

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The innocent behaviour of Chriſtians, inforce the goodneſs and ſimplicity of the Goſpel, and convince unbelievers much better, that it is a divine revelation, than any arguments deducible for reaſon, or the fine harrangues of ſchoolmen, who often darken the ſubject, inſtead of clearing it. Becauſe, example much better proves our ſincerity, that we believe what we profeſs then the bear rehearſal of creeds, or the barren repetition of unfruitful precepts. Nothing, therefore, muſt divert us from our duty, nor be ſubſtituted in its ſtead, but we muſt continue in the exerciſe of it, and hold out to the end, if we would be ſecure, and maintain the divine friendſhip. For perſverance crowns all our endeavours, and we are obliged by the law of faith, not to forſake the holy commandment, but to mortify every ſpecie and degree of wickedneſs, and promote an ardent love to God, the brighteſt beam of divine beauty and which is more affecting, and ſtronger than death. For it is a ſpur to holy vigilance, and wonderfully quickens our pace, *and makes us run with patience*, thro' all the heavy preſſures, and rough ſtages of human life. Thus much the Apoſtle ſignifieth to the Hebrews, when he ſetteth forth the example of the patriarchs, that they might endure afflictions, and be followers of them, *who, thro' faith and patience inherit the promiſes.*

In order to acquire this happy temper, and becoming diſpoſition of mind, he chargeth them to conſider one another, and to mutually emulate to excel one another in charity, and all other good works. For which purpoſe the goſpel was promulged, not to encourage looſeneſs and profaneneſs, but to moderate ſenſual indulgences, and indiſſolubly unite us to God, that

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unanimity, and concord, and brotherly love, may increaſe and abound in every laudable undertaking. Would we be *edifyed by the word*, we muſt diveſt ourſelves of pride and prejudice, thoſe overbearing enemies to truth, and mortal foes to candid enquiry, and read it with the deepeſt humility, the ſhades of which ſets a luſtre on all other graces, and ardently ſupplicate almighty God, to open the eyes of our mind, that we may underſtand it, and be impartial obſervers of it. For unleſs our intellectuals are inlightened, and we are actuated by God's precepts, we ſhall ever remain in darkneſs, and never enter that bleſſed kingdom, where we ſhall ſee God as he is, clothed in the reſplendent rays of light, and the refulgent robes of eternal and unfading glory.

We ought, then, inſtantly to prepare for that ſtate *which is undefiled and paſſeth not away*, and copy after the ſacred image of him, who is perfect in holineſs, and to whom we owe every ſpark of life, and are indebted for every mercy and bleſſing we enjoy, as far as poſſibly we can, or we have ſtrength and ability to perform. For, as the ſoul animates the body, by its reſidence in it, ſo the word ſhould be in the mind, an internal principle of life, to enable us to diſcharge thoſe duties which we owe to God, our neighbour and ourſelves. For, an immoral or profane chriſtian, is a contradiction in terms, and ſo culpable, that one word deſtroys another, and which cannot poſſibly be reconciled. Do not, therefore, attempt impoſſibilities, nor act inconſiſtant with moral purity, or the imitable perfections of the Deity, but follow the directons preſcribed in God's word, that under the power of cooperating grace, it may change our corrupt wills, and ſtubborn diſpoſitions, and make us new creatures,

tures quite different from what we once were, in principle and practice, in new desires and new inclinations, which are obvious and conspicuous to all. For, we, in lieu of serving divers lusts, and striving to humour animal passions, are now judiciously engaged, not in filling the head with notions, which generally leaves the heart empty, but in contemplating the great object of religion, and employing our thoughts about spiritual things, and in cultivating the celestial influences that they may quicken our hopes, and raise our expectations, which will increase more and more unto the perfect day, and break out in full light, after the resurrection. For by indulging these sublime ideas, and the operative meditations of faith, the glories of another world pass before us while it draws back the vale of heavenly things, and reveals its hidden beauties, and its interior excellencies. The sight of this glorious prospect will charm the most uncultivated heart, and elevate the most drowsy eyes, and fix them more intensely upon God, who will suffer none to break our peace, if we commit ourselves to his care, and to the wing of his protecting providence. God is never backward to help such, as do not risque their immortality, for an uncertain and precarious moment, but are endeavouring to strengthen their faith, by the vigilance of an holy activity, and by making due preparation, for that safe and easy repose, in the sacred lap of eternity. And therefore do not distrust God's promises, nor stifle the motions of his spirit, which is always striving with man, but rely upon the word of his grace which is able to save your souls, and he will not deceive you. *I trust in the Lord*, says the pious Psalmist, *for his way is perfect, and the word of the Lord*

Lord is tryed, and he is a ſhield, and buckler to them that fear him and truſt in his ways. O taſte and ſee how gracious the Lord is. Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in him. Bleſſed is the people that can rejoice in thee, in whoſe heart are thy ways, who paſſing through the valley of weeping make it a well, and go from ſtrength to ſtrength, 'till they appear before God, in Zion. Bleſſed are the pure in heart for they ſhall ſee God; and bleſſed are they that dwell in thy houſe, they will be always praiſing thee. By this we ſee the neceſſity of holineſs, and of holding faſt by God, if we would enjoy inward peace and happineſs. For all things elſe beſides God, are but flaſhy appearances, in which there is nothing real, but in God there is ſolidity and ſtability, and that without diminution, or the leaſt alteration. What more ſhall be offered to your conſideration, and to perſuade you to read the ſcriptures to edification, in which thoſe truths are contained, ſhall be drawn from them, as helps to build you up, in your holy faith. For it's evident they teach nothing but what tends to inform the judgement, and we are abſolutely concerned to know, to make us perfect and complete in the knowledge of Chriſt crucified, which to know is life eternal. What things ſoever were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we thro' patience and comfort of the ſcriptures, might have hope. For all ſcripture is given by inſpiration from God, and is profitable for correction, for reproof, and for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, *that the man of God may be thoroughly furniſhed unto every good word and work, and be made wiſe unto everlaſting ſalvation, through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* They deſcribe each public, and each private virtue, with all that native

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ſimplicity, and majeſtick eloquence, which captivates the affections, and animates the ſoul. But though our hopes are well grounded, and we are fore-warned by the word, and our own daily obſervation, not to truſt the flattering ſpeeches of men, but reſt intirely upon God: Yet diſcontented creatures will rage, and unbelievers reproachfully cavil, and darken counſel by words, to weaken our belief, and remove our affiance in God, but all theſe wranglings are vain, and to little or no purpoſe. We cannot alter God's manner of acting, nor any of his unchangeable decrees; for God, whoſe attributes and perfections are always the ſame, is not moved by our idle diſputes, nor by our unjuſtifiable murmurings, which may ſurprizingly affect us, but can never affect him, *whoſe righteouſneſs ſtandeth like the high mountains, and whoſe judgements are a great deep.* Do not, then, liſten to vain words, nor the bluſterings of profane and irreligious men, but endeavour to ſilence thoſe impertinent dictators, and to be ſubmiſſive to the dominion of uncorrupted reaſon, and to the pure and holy law of an unchangeable God. Since every obſtacle is removed, and every faculty ſtrengthened by grace, that tends to ſubdue our internal commotions, and increaſe and forward every laudable, and generous undertaking, we ought to employ thoſe faculties, to the beſt and nobleſt purpoſes. For God has fully revealed his will, not in dark and ambiguous phraſes, nor in types and figures, but in a plain declaration from heaven, which we with joyful gratitude ought to receive, as a diſtinguiſhable mark of infinite favour, to gladden our hearts and make us wait with patience, and reſignation all the days of our appointed time. For the Lord

knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations, and to reſerve the unjuſt for judgement. In order to be warned againſt repining, and be acquainted with that modeſt diſpoſition, ſo neceſſary to our happineſs, in this place of riot and tumult, we muſt conſult the new teſtament, in which is contained the life of Jeſus, and from thence we may learn what that patience is, which is mixed with comfort and accompanies hope, and what it is not. It is not a ſtoical ſtupidity, or a ſtate of inſenſibility, of what may befall us, or by divine permiſſion happen to us, as if we were mere ſtocks and ſtones, and could defie every calamity, and the tender feelings of humanity. But the patience the ſcripture ſpeaks of, is ſeen by a due ſubmiſſion in all ſtates and conditions to the will and appointment of heaven, and the good pleaſure and providence of God. This we muſt conform to, if we would be the diſciples and followers of the pure and ſpotleſs Jeſus. For though he was roughly handled by men, yet he uſed no exaſperating ſpeeches, but bore their inſults with patience, and with marvellous conſtancy, which rendered him ſuperior to injuries, and to all thoſe other crimes, which malevolence ſlanderouſly upbraided him with, and falſely accuſed him of. In the midſt of his ſufferings, and in his bittereſt accuſations, he neither did nor ſaid any thing to inflame, or irritate his irreconcileable foes, nor to depreciate his obedience, but behaved as the anointed of God, and as our peace-offering for ſin. The duties which were ſo harſh to nature, he inſtructs us by his preaching, and the ignominy of his death, how to demean our-ſelves under afflictions, and under the foreſt, and heavieſt calami-

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ties. This is the patience the ſcripture ſpeaks of, and ſo ſtrongly recommends to us, and which is of a ſpiritual and divine nature, it is the comfort of God, in the ſoul to carry our thoughts beyond the grave to the bright world of alert and agile ſpirits. *In the multitude of my thoughts, thy comforts delight my ſoul: For thy word hath quickened me.* It likewiſe proceeds from a uniform courſe of obedience, which is ſupported by hope, and internal firmneſs, to bear our troubles with decency, and as preparatives to our final diſſolution, and to make that awful event happy, and that deciſive period comfortable. Meditations on the immenſe realities of futurity, and earneſt deſire of them, before all the honours of this world, and its magnificent ſhadows, will make us leſs ſtubborn, and more reſigned to that good and wiſe Being, who is what he always was, and ever will be, 'till this earth be conſumed, and all its ancient grandeur and glory reduced to aſhes. Theſe and ſuch like thoughts on the divine immutability, and the immenſe joys of eternity, cauſed the apoſtle to ſay, in an elevated pitch of devotion, and the true ſpirit of internal piety, that, *though the outward man decayed, yet the inward man was renewed day by day.* This celeſtial ſteadineſs of diſpoſition, keeps our ſouls compoſed and immoveable in all thoſe difficulties and moſt ſhocking diſaſters, which diſtreſs both body and mind in ſuch a manner, as fills them with uneaſy ſenſations, and painful apprehenſions. The terrors we are often ſeized with, are of divers kinds, ſome as common to chriſtians, and ſome from other unhappy perſons, who endeavour to teaze and vex their fellow creatures, and ſome from the hand of

Providence, and more from our ſelves, and the want of prudence and diſcretion. But of what kind ſoever they be, if they be inflicted on us, for the ſake of Chriſt, the patience the ſcripture extols, and beſtows ſuch high encomiums upon, will enable us to bear our ſufferings as chriſtians, and as members of that ſacred community, of which Chriſt is prieſt and king. The holy books are far from encouraging Chriſt's diſciples, to expect flouriſhing circumſtances here, but rather to look for diſappointments and cruel treatment, that they may not rate their happineſs too high, but place their chief good and ſupreme ſatisfaction upon God. *Hence*, ſays our Lord to his convert, *theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace, in the world ye ſhall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* Whoever is really perſuaded of this, cannot but reliſh the deſcription of the pſalmiſt, and be wonderfully comforted and revived by it. *Bleſſed is the man whoſe tranſgreſſions are forgiven, and whoſe ſin is covered. Bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whoſe mouth is no guile.* Would we reap any inſtruction, or ſpiritual advantage from the ſcriptures, we muſt read them with ſerioufneſs, and with an humbling ſence of our unworthineſs, and the incomprehenſible great and glorious majeſty of God. But ſome people have different ideas and different ends to ſerve, and pay ſo little regard to this duty, that they are ſeldom employed in the manner they ought: But, the common pretence is buſineſs, and difficult ſtruggles with the world, to procure a decent and comfortable livelihood for themſelves and their families, which will be no excuſe for them at the bar, where there is no pacifying an enraged conſcience, nor bribing

ing an uncorrupt and upright Judge, God allows time and opportunity for every work under the ſun; and requires nothing more of us then what we have ſtrength and opportunity to perform. Beſides, we are endued with ſpiritual powers, ſufficent to keep us in the ſacred practice of virtue, and the ſeveral parts of true and genuine religeon. The availing ourſelves of mercy, for neglecting of a poſitive command, and the will of our univerſal ſovereign, who is perfect reaſon himſelf, and enjoins nothing but what is ſo, and muſt be complied with, if we would avoid the evils of this life, and eſcape the miſeries of the next. The working out our ſalvation, cannot be matter of little or no importance, unleſs the higher buſineſs of life be ſubordinate to its lower concerns, in compariſon of which, they hardly deſerve to be mentioned, or even ſo much as thought of. Reading and hearing the word, is univerſal, and indiſpenſable, it reaches from the meaneſt cottager, to him that is clothed in purple and ſeated on a throne, that all might fear the Lord, and obſerve his ſtatutes: Agreeable to which, ſays the pious pſalmiſt, *I hid thy law within my heart, that I might not ſin againſt thee.* Beſides, theſe divine and moral exerciſes are not arbitrary commands, which have no reaſon to ſupport them, but rational and profitable duties, appointed by that infinitely wiſe Being, who has an unqueſtionable right over us, and to command whatever he pleaſes. He that planted the ear, and gave us the faculty of hearing, ſhall he not be heard? Reading and hearing the word, are introductive and preparative duties to faith unfeigned, and repentance out of a pure heart and a good conſcience, that we may be an holy people, and preſent every man

perfect in Chriſt. This is fulfilling the law, and the end of the commandment. In order to accompliſh this weighty affair, let us not ſtand unreſolved, but walk in the good old path, and diſcharge the ſeveral reſpective duties which reaſon and religion oblige us to, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, and we ſhall have the Lord for our God. *Bleſſed is the man that feareth always, and whoſe eyes are upon the Lord, he will find a father of him, in whom the fatherleſs findeth mercy, and the diſtreſſed ſuccour and refreſhment.* That theſe meditations may be rendered effectual, we muſt attend the ſtated times of public worſhip, and pay due reſpect and reverence to almighty God, the author of all powers and faculties. This being the deſign of our aſſemblies, we ſhould be religiouſly zealous, and vigilantly active, and not ſtand gazing one upon another, as if it were matter of indifferency, and ſo looſe the preſent moment, which is out of our power to recall, and can never more return. For tho' labour be the effect of grace, yet it always makes grace abound, and abundantly to increaſe. Let us not then be inactive, for ſuch as expect help by miraculous ways, ſet aſide the means to attain it, and follow the ſuperſtitious whimſies and the ſenſeleſs ſchemes of error and deluſion. Theſe uſeful admonitions and weighty conſiderations ought to curb arrogant boaſtings, which men of great abilities are guilty of, and ſtrangely carried away with. But, notwithſtanding mens vanity, and the towering flights of pride and ambition, and other oſtentatious views, every good gift comes from above, from the father of lights, in whom there is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning. We then who can do nothing of our-ſelves, but

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our ſufficiency is of God, ought diligently to employ thoſe talents, and not to bury them in the earth, nor to hide them in a napkin. For all the bleſſings of natural life, the qualities of the body, beauty, health, and ſtrength, or the noble endowments of the mind, quickneſs of parts, a retentive memory, and the charms of eloquence, are all God's gifts, all temporary ones, ſuch as riches and honour, dignity and majeſty, are derived from God, and conveyed to us through the channels or mediums of ſecond cauſes. *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, nor the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he knoweth me that I am the Lord, and beſides me there is no God, that can do as I do.* Let us then beware of haughtineſs of temper, and the buſy ſpirit of colluſion and deceit, which often interrupts our devotion, both in public and in private, and that retirement in our cloſet where no eye can ſee, but that all-pervading eye which ſpieth out all our ways, and all our mental reſerves and horrid equivocations. Since then we cannot ſcreen our diſſimulation from God, nor the eye of this allſearching deity, who is much better acquainted with us than we are, or poſſibly can be, with our-ſelves, we ſhould take more heed to our ways, and not truſt to ſuperficial performances. For we are incircled with his preſence who obſerves the primary motions, and chief ſprings of all our actions, and the views and ends we have in doing them. *Thou knoweſt, Lord, our down ſittings, and our upriſings, and underſtandeth our thoughts afar off. There is not a word in my tongue but thou, O Lord, knoweſt it altogether, thou haſt ſet me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence, or*

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whither ſhall I fly from thy ſpirit, if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the utmoſt part of the ſea, even there ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand ſhall uphold me. If I ſay the darkneſs ſhall cover me, even the night ſhall be light about me, yea the darkneſs hideth not from thee, but the darkneſs and the light to thee are both alike.

I ſhall now draw an inference or two, from what has been already conſidered, and then conclude. The firſt inference that ſhall be drawn, from the foregoing meditations, will be this, if God's being and perfections were not in all generations, and in all climates and countries the ſame, we could have no affiance in him, but our minds would be ſo filled with doubts, and ſuch terrible racking fears, that we could have no ſolid peace or ſtable foundation to build upon, but this is our conſolation, that our God is unchangeable, in all his eſſential properties, and if we duly ſerve and worſhip him, he, in the moſt imminent dangers, and under the foreſt afflictions, when we have not ſo much as a gleam of hope, will diſſipate the dark cloud, and point out our deliverance. For the God whom we adore, and awfully reverence, is the God that preſerved Noah and his family in the ark, from periſhing in the waters, and went with Joſeph into Egypt, and continued his almighty defender, and irreſiſtable guardian, and bounteous benefactor, 'till he forgot the cruelty of his brethren, and the labour and toil of his father's houſe. This was the God, that remembered his people in the wilderneſs, and looked upon their troubles, and filled their tongues with joyful praiſes, and their mouths with ſongs of triumph. His glorious titles ſtood invariable, and in ſuperable through all the ſurprizing changes

changes and revolutions of providence. nor can any of thoſe perfections decay, nor rolling years make any alteration, in the Ancient of days, who wants nothing of us, but is both willing and ready to make ſuch happy as do not ſtrive to make themſelves miſerable, Let us then not truſt to the fickle and wavering fancies of unſteady men. who have neither wiſdom, nor ſkill to form their ſchemes, nor ſtrength nor ability to complete their deſigns. We cannot call the breath we draw our own, nor promiſe ourſelves one moment's exiſtence, or happineſs in this world, or in that which is to come. Can we depend upon thoſe feeble props, and yet tremble and ignominouſly deſpair, under the mighty protection of an irreſiſtable God? It muſt diſcover great ignorance and imperfection in man, not to cleave cloſe to God, and ſubmit to his benificent ruler, who only can repleniſh the mind, with ſuch things as are ſuitable to the immaterial and conceivable better part. The delights of the human ſoul are not what we poſſeſs in common with brutes, nor ſuch as reſult from corporeal creatures, but thoſe we have in common with angels, and the immortal ſpirits above. For when God ſtampt upon man his image, he did not leave him to himſelf, to ramble he knew not whither, but incloſed him in a garden, where every thing was adapted to his reaſon, that bright luminary of the ſoul, and an internal ray and ſpark of the heavenly flame. Since the divine omnipotence is not changed, nor his benignity in the leaſt deminiſhed, we have no reaſon to diſtruſt providence, or the impartial proceedings of infinite Juſtice. God will find out them that hate him, and make his enemies to fall before his face, and feel

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the weight of his ſceptre. We ought not then to give way to diſcontent, but to cultivate patience under ſufferings, and intire ſubmiſſion, and reſignation to the divine will: For patience is productive of much good, a ſecurity to honeſt ſincere minds and procures an opportunity of preparing for that judgement, where innocence will be illuſtriouſly exhibited, and injured honour recieve reparation, for the indignities offered to it. The righteouſneſs of his ſervant will be clear as the light, and their juſt dealings as the noon-day. So that whatever afflictions befall God's choſen, they are intended as remedies, to wean their affections from the earth, and prepare them for that retreat in heaven, where their troubles not only ceaſe, and wearyſome journeys end, but they have an everlaſting habitation, and continual reſt with God. *O how infinite is the pleaſure and pleaſing is the calm of thoſe whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee!* One draught of that river, which makes glad the city of God, the ſanctuary of reſt and conſolation, ſweetens the bitterneſs of life, and allays the painful terrors of death, turns our uneaſineſs and dejectedneſs of ſpirit into joy. So that whenever we leave our-ſelves, and all our concerns for time and eternity, in the hands of God, we are then abſolutly ſafe, and compleatly happy. Patience, likewiſe, is a comfort which reſults from doing our duty, and doing thoſe things which are of good report among men, and lovely and amiable in the ſight of God our Saviour: *For our rejoicing*, ſays the Apoſtle, *is the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not in fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in this world.* Such

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reflections are neceſſary to enliven faith, and to improve our beleif, that we may not faint in the glorious cauſe, and looſe what we ardently wiſhed for, and vigilantly ſought after. But an undiſciplin'd and cholerick diſpoſition, is expoſed to all thoſe evils, which they are ever obnoxious to, and unable to remove, or effectually to repel. Let us then endeavour to cheriſh faith, and improve the virtue of patience, or the firy trial will be too fierce, and the ſcorching flames thereof deſtroy us. Our Lord, in order to arm his followers, againſt all thoſe dreadful ſtorms, and fatal horrid diſaſters, which would overtake them, and fall heavy upon them, fore-warned his diſciples of their miſery, and aſſured them that in the world they ſhould have great tribulation, and that they only who endure to the end ſhall be ſaved. We ſee by this kind caution, that final perſeverance is peremptorily required, and that without patience, the main ſupport of duty fails, and hope looſes its weight, and reviving and chearing influences. The deſired object wants ſtrength, to carry us through this ſeditious and contentious ſtate, with any degree of comfort, or proſpect of real ſatisfaction. Let us, then, be induſtriouſly active, in learning the divine art of ſelf denial, or the treacherous demon will be victorious, and come off with triumph, and leave us to lament our folly, and reproachful negligence. Would we be able to ſuſtain thoſe alarming ſhocks, and all thoſe diſheart'ning ſtruggles, which incommode and obſtruct our voyage to eternity, we muſt put on the helmet of ſalvation, and the ſword of the ſpirit, as the beſt expedient, to ſecure our ſafety, and render our efforts ſucceſsful.

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We, then, ought to cultivate magnanimity, and the ſpirit of evangelical piety, leaſt ſome bold incendiary wound us with the poliſhed ſhafts of his quiver, and leave us in jeopardy, to lament our want of courage, and affiance in God, the ſaviour of all that believe. In order to gain the glorious victory, we muſt cleave to him, and hold faſt by him, who tieth up the hands of the wicked, and keeps our feet from falling, and he will ſuffer none to ſeduce us, or leſſen our eſteem of, and dependance on his ſacred and immutable promiſes. But, notwithſtanding the deluſive arts of ſatan, we have no room to diſtruſt Providence, whoſe bounty continually feeds us, and every moment liberally ſupplies us, that he will be wanting in his care of us, and not make ſufficient proviſion for us. We cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe this of God, nor harbour any ſuch thoughts of him. *Conſider the ravens, they neither ſow nor reap, have neither ſtore-houſe nor barns, yet, God feedeth them: How much better are ye than the fowls. And which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his ſtature? If ye be not able to do the thing which is leaſt, why take ye thought for the reſt? Conſider the lilies, how they grow, they toil not, they ſpin not, yet, I ſay unto you, that Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe. If God ſo clothe the graſs, which to day is in the field, and tomorrow is caſt into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith, and leſs diſcernment, not to ſee thoſe mercies, which are ſo viſible to every eye, and diſcend to the fowls of heaven, and the beaſts of the field, creatures of little or no value, in compariſon of man, who was made little lower than angels, to be crowned with majeſty and honour, and made equal with thoſe glorious and immortal ſpirits.*

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This ſhould fortify us againſt racking fears, and diſtracting cares, ſince God not only regards our bodily part, but has provided for the nobleſt part of our-ſelves, our immaterial and ſpiritual ſubſtance, our never dying and immortal ſouls. This laſt mentioned bleſſing is ſo amazingly great, and of ſuch immence worth, that it will not be aſſigned to any, but ſuch as deteſt all thoſe allurements, which flutter on the ſurface of the imaginations, and crowd the mind with multitudes of confuſed and ſhattered ideas. Secondly, the other inference I ſhall draw from the proceeding meditations will be to ſhew, without that abſolutely neceſſary duty, inherent righteouſneſs, no outward righteouſneſs will avail, or be acceptable to the pure and ſpotleſs Majeſty of heaven, becauſe the righteouſneſs our Lord inſiſts on, is not that ceremonial righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is of faith, which changes the will and inclinations, and all the powers and faculties depending on them, and acting in conjuction with them. So that you cannot draw from holy premiſes licentious concluſions, nor ſet the grace of the goſpel againſt the precepts of it, unleſs the thick cloud of ignorance prevail over the clear light of reaſon, and darken the face of the ſun. Let us not then blind the human underſtanding, but contemplate the divine word, and we ſhall be inſtructed in all needful inquiries, how to behave in the various viciſitudes, and moſt critical ſeaſons of mortal life. For, God, who is ever mindful of us, though we ſeldom think of him, and would counter-act all his purpoſes, will lead us to all things profitable, if we obſerve his holy covenants, and his invariable laws. The divine being is our creator and our only

only keeper, from our exiſtence in the womb, thro' all the perilous, and intricate ſteps of this uncertain life, to this preſent moment. The undeſigning path we trod, was marked by thy providence, and the vigilance of thy kind and extenſive hand. So that we have many deliverances to recount, and variety of unaſked mercies to recall, which we not only enjoy in great abundance, but we have alſo reaſon to be thankful, and to adore and magnify the goodneſs of God, in not granting us our wiſhes, but in permitting us to acquire theſe things, in which appeared nothing but ruin, and unavoidable diſtreſs, and in making them the inſtruments, of raiſing us from indigence, and neceſſity, to a more comfortable, and much happier ſituation. For God whoſe wiſdom is like himſelf, extended through all this myſterious maze, often acts by ways unperceiveable, and unknown to any but himſelf, ſuffers not his people, in the hours of darkneſs, to ſee the hand that moves toward them, 'till the day unexpectedly breaks, and the heavenly light ſhines upon them, to diſperſe their gloomy fears, and to refreſh and comfort their ſouls. By theſe frequent interpoſitions, and other intermediate acts of Providence, we are under double obligations to be thankful, and to obſerve the divine injunctions, and not to ſlacken our pace, on any pretence whatever, but to perſevere in all good works, and in the holy ordinances, and ſacred inſtitutions of religion. For by ſo doing, and continuing in the practice of virtue, God will be ever careful of us, and give his angelscharge over us, that we fall not into theſnares, and inticements of ſin, nor daſh our feet againſt a ſtone. For the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them

that

that fear him, and are firmly attached to him, and the laws of his ſpiritual kingdom; we, from daily experience of God's liberality, and generous acts of his providence, ſhall be conſtrained to confeſs, great is the Lord, and great is his power, that he hath not forſaken us, nor forgotten us, but is ready, at all convenient times and ſeaſons, to relieve thoſe that fly to him, and earneſtly implore his aſſiſtance. This great almighty being will, in ſpite of men or devils, make his way through all oppoſition, and deliver us from all thoſe calamities and miſeries, which we, by inadvertency and negligence, have brought upon ourſelves, and wou'd have proved our utter ruin, had not the wakeful and watchful eye of that divine Guardian, who neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps, interpoſed in our favour, and been our irreſiſtable defender. Let us, therefore, who have taſted of infinite benignity, give up ourſelves intirely to him, whoſe bounty is not ſealed, whoſe power is not deminiſhed, and whoſe mercy endureth for ever. For there is nothing here durable, that we can ſecurely reſt in, or, with abſolute ſafety, truſt, beſides that unchangeable Deity, who is the creator of the univerſe, and parent of all the families of the earth; and is more affectionately concern'd for the happineſs and wellfare of his children, than any mother poſſibly can be for her ſucking child, or the helpleſs babe at her tender breaſt. The frequent ruminating on theſe things, muſt be of inconceivable conſolation to believers, and all that live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, in the tragical hours of adverſity, and when almoſt driven to deſpair, to have the the Lord for their God, who will be their ſhield and buckler, and has engaged, by an everlaſting covenant, never to leave ſuch as place their confidence in him, but

as the ſufferings of Chriſt abound, ſo their comforts and conſolations abound. Alſo, St. Paul, when priſoner at Rome, was ſo elevated in ſpirit, at hearing the care the Phillipians took of him, that he greatly rejoiced in the Lord. If human care was ſo reviving to our apoſtle, that it made him wonderfully glad, how ought we to rejoice in the care the God and Father of our Lord Chriſt, takes of every one of us, and that in the moſt mournful and pitiable circumſtances, when men ſet themſelves againſt us, and maliciouſly ſtrive to diſtreſs us. But notwithſtanding theſe ſeaſons of ſadneſs, ſuch as are unfeignedly reſigned to providence, and the diſpoſal of their heavenly director, will triumph in his goodneſs, and in his unbounded clemency. For thou, Lord, haſt conſidered my trouble, and known my ſoul in adverſity, and when covered with deep melancholy. The moſt frightful revolutions, and terrifying commotions on earth, will not ſhake the believers faith, nor weaken his truſt in God, nor cauſe any bitter uneaſineſs or grievous diſturbances betwixt reaſon and appetite, ſince heaven is open to all, and the throne of God is acceſſible, and we may have free acceſs to it, and pour out our ſouls before it. When Daniel fore-ſaw the changes God was making in the earth, in removing kings and ſetting up kings, it made him in thoſe ſurprizing viciſſitudes, break not out into deſpondence, but into bleſſing and praiſing God. *Bleſſed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wiſdom and might are his, he changeth times and ſeaſons, he pulleth down one and ſetteth up another, and giveth, the kingdoms of the earth to whomſoever he pleaſes.* Theſe various changes in the world, made none in God, nor abated his reſpect for man, the offspring of heaven. For the Lord is full of mercy and good fruits.

And

And tho' we are apt to ſtagger, thro' the ſecret miſgivings of unbelief, yet we have no reaſon to doubt but God will fulfill his word, and punctually obſerve his engagements. *O come hither all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my ſoul, I will aſcribe righteouſneſs to my maker, and leave my record with a people unborn, that the generations to come may riſe up and praiſe the Lord.* Thy favors for multitude are more in number than the ſtars of heaven, or the ſands on the ſea ſhore. The care the Lord taketh of his people, is like that he took of the land of Canaan, which, as Moſes ſaid, was a land the Lord thy God careth for, for the eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of it. Such is God's reſpect for his ſervants, and all that fear and honour him, from thier formation in the womb, to the final cloſe and concluſion of life, *for, whereſoever they go, he goeth before them, to bleſs their goings out and their comings in.* How joyous and reviving is this to believers, to have God always with them, to defend them againſt deſparate ruffians, and other cruel barbarians, 'till they arrive at the ſecure and ſerene harbour, the ſweet and quiet realms of concord and perfect harmony. In order to obtain this divine diſpoſition, and be qualified for the heavenly city, we muſt deveſt our-ſelves of pride, that implacable enemy to humility, and the beauteous charms of virtue and true religion, and meekly beſeech Almighty God, to impreſs a grateful and thankful ſenſe of his manifold mercies, upon our hearts, that we may be ready for the awful ſummons, and chearfully reſign ourſelves to God's diſpoſal. See how the moments fly away, and the immenſe reward draws near, when this tottering ſcene will be changed, and its withering objects die, and be ſeen no more.

Rouſe up, O my ſoul, to the vigilant purſuit of divine felicities, waken all thy ſpiritual powers, that thy holy induſtry ſink not beneath thy warmeſt affections, which thou, in thy ſerious hours excited, and zealouſly cherriſh'd. It is grace alone, that keeps alive the divine ſpark, which comes from above, and inflames our cold hearts, and carries them to the celeſtial ſpring. So that if God is pleaſed to finiſh his own work, we may undauntedly cry out, *O death where is thy ſting, O grave where is thy boaſted victory.* The conqueſt is mine, and I, through the rich grace of Chriſt, my all-ſufficient leader and guide, ſhall paſs in triumph, through thy dark and dreary dominions, to the ſeats of immortality, and appear there, not as a captive bound in chains, but as a victorious ſoldier of Jeſus, and be crown'd with the reſplendent and refulgent robes of glory. Can we be ſo ſtupid, as to prefer a little ſhining clay, or the dazling glitter of ſome painted object, before the ſubſtantial and durable delights of eternity, or had we rather live deliciouſly, or fare ſumptuouſly for a few days, than feed on that rich banquet, which is reſerv'd for us in heaven. Should we make ſo bad a choice, or act ſo very indiſcretely, it plainly diſcovers, a defect in the underſtanding. For there is no compariſon betwixt the good things of this world, and the good things of the next, neither in degree or duration. Airy honours or carnal pleaſures, are all empty delights, and unſatisfying and fleeting amuſements, are but thin appearances of happineſs, or mere ſhadows in maſquerade, that brings no real content or ſatisfaction to a ſoul that hungers and thirſts after righteouſneſs. What monſters muſt ſuch be as chuſe tranſient delights, the pleaſures of a ſhort dream, before ever-ſatisfying joys,

or

or to avoid a ſlight evil, venture on the precipice of ruin, and borders of irrecoverable miſery. Be not reſtleſs under ſufferings, or the ſmarting rod of afflictions, but ſtay awhile, and your troubles will be turned into joy, your bondage into perfect freedom, and your mourning into ſongs of triumph, and hallelujahs of everlaſting praiſe. There is nothing too hard for God, or difficult for him to perform, nor place where his eye cannot pierce; his univerſal preſence is ſo extenſive, and his divine omnipotence ſo mighty, that it can reach the deepeſt cavern, and change the darkeſt cell, into a manſion of light, and make it a haven of rejoicing. Walls and bulwarks are no interruption to the ſmiles and reviving countenance of the moſt high. Be not then fretful nor impatient, under the divine chaſtiſement, but eaſy, and compoſed, and reſigned, for pain, and great afflictions, and diſappointments, are clouds that quickly paſs away, but ſuch as endure them with humility and meekneſs to the end, will meet with a welcome reception at the ſolemn day of accounts, when the illuſtrious Jeſus ſhall come in the firmament of heaven, attended with a majeſtic train of angels, to behold the equity of his providence, and to witneſs the impartiality of his determinations. That theſe awful truths may abide with us, and kindle the ſacred flames of devotion, let us look up ſteadfaſtly to God, and thoſe unſullied objects, and refreſhing beams of delight, which are yet to come, and we ſhall be happy in that knowledge, which we derive from the ſources of contemplation, and the uncorrupted ſprings of reflection. Here the body cannot keep peace with the ſoul, in its enquiries and frequent ardous ſearches. But when our ſouls ſhall act in glorified bodies, they will be ever

on the wing, without ever weakening their ſtrength, or exhauſting their vigour. The ſublimity of theſe thoughts and the loftineſs of the ſubject, made a celebrated pagan that often was diffident, break out into divine exaltation, and ſacred raptures of joy. O glorious day, when ſhall I depart from this croud of men on earth, this horrid ſink of pollution, and be admitted into the ſociety above! i. e. ſuch as have done honour to their country, and dignified it by virtuous lives, and generous worthy actions. Theſe are undoubted and enlarged ideas, but how much more does that religion which Chriſt exhibits to our view open ſtill brighter ſcenes of glory, and an infinitely happier ſtate, where we ſhall with the ſpirits of juſt men, be made perfect, with an innumerable company of angels; when Jeſus, the mediator of a new and better covenant, and God the judge of all, and our immaculate and ſpotleſs Jeſus, who ſaid to his Father, I will that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, may be with me, and behold my glory. By this it's obvious to unprejudiced minds, not darken'd by luſt, nor warped by the ſpirit of deluſion and error, that irreligion and immorality is built upon the ruins of what is noble, and praiſe worthy in human nature, and what hinders the rational efforts of the ſoul, and deprieves it of all that ſerenity, and internal compliance, which cannot be acquired and poſſeſſed without the exerciſe of virtue, and an uniform and ſteady courſe of goſpel obedience. For it's a grand miſtake, and very pernicious, and fatal to the human ſoul, that men of unballanced minds, or of a roving, and ranging diſpoſition, who are perpetually wandering abroad, and looking for happineſs in things without, and fix on nothing but the flattering and fallacious objects of ſenſe.

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The felicity of ſuch perſons, muſt be very unſtable and uncertain, becauſe the ſoul, which is the ſubject of it, is ſo unſteady, and it's faculties ſo wavering, and fluctuating, that they ramble in their minds from one part of the globe to another, and are as often carried up to heaven, and as often fall down to the deep, which betray the ſuccours reaſon offers, and the friendly inſtruction of that noble faculty which enlightens our intellectual ſouls, and gives them ſuperiority and dominion over all other creatures. We ought not to depreciate, nor contemptuouſly treat this heavenly guide, but follow its advice and direction, and induſtriouſly employ our precious time, leſt ſome violent ſickneſs, or ſome fatal calamity ſeize us, and death in all his horrors ſurprize us, and mortally wound us, and deprive us of thoſe happy opportunities, and put them out of our power for ever. For, ſecure as we may imagine ourſelves, and that we are out of danger, we know not what alteration a day or even the next hour may produce: And therefore be not careleſs, nor vainly boaſt of to-morrow, which we may never ſee, nor the ſoundneſs, and goodneſs of an healthful conſtitution, which is not in our power to preſerve. For time is upon the wing, and eternity (*) ſtands at our door, and

(*) O Eternity! Eternity! How are our boldeſt and ſtrongeſt thoughts loſt and overwhelmed in thee, who can ſet land-marks, to limit thy dimenſions; or find plumets to fathom thy depths; arithmeticians have figures, to compute all the digreſſions of time; aſtronomers have inſtruments to calculate the diſtance of the planets: What numbers can ſtate, what lines can gauge the lengths and breadths of eternity? It's higher than the heavens, what canſt thou do: deeper than hell, what canſt thou know; the meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea. Myſterious mighty exiſtence! a ſum not to be leſſened by the largeſt deductions, an extent not to be contracted by all poſſible diminutions, none

we without due preparation of heart, and being waſh'd in the blood of the Lamb, our exalted Saviour, may be doomed to the miſery, and inconceivable woe, which

can truly ſay, after the moſt prodigious waſte of ages, that ſo much of eternity is gone. For, when millions of centuries are elapſed, it is but jeſt commencing; and when millions more have run their ample round, it will be no nearer ending. When ages innumerous as the flowers of ſpring, increaſed by the herbage of ſummer, both augmented by the leaves of autumn, all multiplied by the drops of rain which drowns the winter; when theſe, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand more than can be repreſented by any ſimilitude, or imagined by any conceptions, are all revolved, eternity, vaſt, boundleſs, amazing eternity, will only be beginning. What a pleaſing, yet awful thought is this! Full of delight, and full of dread: O may it alarm our fears, and quicken our hopes, and animate all our endeavours, ſince we are ſoon to launch into this endleſs and inconceivable ſtate; let us give all diligence to ſecure our entrance into bliſs; let us now give all diligence, becauſe there is no alteration in the ſcenes of futurity, the wheel never turns, all is ſteadfaſt and immovable beyond the grave: Whether we are ſeated on the throne, or ſtretch'd upon the rack, a ſeal will be ſet to our condition, by the hand of everlaſting mercy, or inflexible juſtice. The ſaints always rejoice amidſt the ſmiles of heaven, their harps are continually tuned; their triumphs admit of no intermiſſion. The ruin alſo of the wicked, is irremediable, the fatal ſentence once paſſed, is never to be repealed, no hope of exchanging their doleful habitations, but all things bear the ſame diſmal aſpect for ever and ever. The wicked ſeem to lie here, like malefactors, in a deep and ſtrong dungeon, reſerved againſt the day of trial. Their departure was without peace, clouds of horror ſat lowering on their cloſing eyes, moſt ſadly foreboding the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever. When the laſt ſickneſs ſeized their frame, and the inevitable change advanced, when they ſaw the fatal arrow a fitting to the ſtrings, and ſaw the deadly archer aiming at their life, and felt the venomed ſhaft faſtened on their vitals, what fearfulneſs came upon them, what horrible dread overwhelmed them. How did they ſtand ſhuddering on the tremendous precipice, exceſſively afraid to die, and utterly unable to live. O what pale revivers, what ſtartling proſpects conſpire to augment their ſorrows. They look backward, and behold a melancholy ſcene, ſins unrepented of, mercy ſlighted, and the day of grace ending. They look forward, and nothing preſents itſelf but the righteous Judge, the dreadful tribunal, and moſt ſolemn reckoning. If this be the end of the ungodly, my ſoul come not into their ſecret, nor into their aſſembly, and be not united with them. Herveys pious meditations. Vol. the firſt.

none

none can form any conceptions of. Let us then be more aſſiduous, and lay hold of every convenient ſeaſon that offers, that we may be ready againſt the great and terrible day of the Lord, when all the refined ſchemes of artifice and deceit, of guile and hypocriſy, of fraud and injuſtice, will be unriddled, and God will judge the world in righteouſneſs, not according to external appearances, or what men ſeem to be, but what they really are. The ſlander of venemous tongues, when our innocence is clear, and conſcience does not condemn us, will not abate thoſe ſprings of pleaſure, which flow from the ſtreams of virtue, and the conſtant obſervation of God's ordinances. By thus uſing our beſt and nobleſt faculties, we ſhall have the protection of him, by whom kings reign, and princes decree juſtice; by the breath of his mouth whole armies fall, and the mightieſt fleets are driven to deſtruction. Would we be guarded by this defender, we muſt take ſhelter under that banner, which no enemy dare to aſſault, nor attempt to draw us from our ſtrong, and impregnable holds, ſince God is thus amazingly great, we cannot on the principles of reaſon, and authority of God's word, but vigorouſly ſue for an alliance with him, who is able to ſave or deſtroy us, for our ſtrength is but weakneſs, and all our glory as nothing, in compariſon of that deity, before whom all nations are but as the drop of a bucket, and counted as the ſmall duſt of the ballance. Theſe ſerious meditations of omnipotence, and the feeble nature of man, teach us the vanity of each mortal ſcene, the mutability and inconſtancy of earthly accommodations, and all terrene poſſeſſions, and the ſlipperineſs of human greatneſs. (*) For the ſharp arrows of

death, which levels the monarch as well as the ſlave, will pierce our hearts, and ſtrike a pale hue over our limbs, and we ſhall be ſtripped of all our pride, and vanity, and and be wrapped up in a ſhroud. The beauteous and moſt delicate features, will be a prey for worms, and this curious machine loſe its exquiſite form, and be mingled with the ruins of time, which alters and conſumes all things. Life is dying, and the comforts of it; carnal joys are but of ſhort continuance, the world paſſes away, and the luſt thereof. All the objects of the ſenſual paſſions fade. The fineſt ſtamp of beauty, how eaſily is it marred by ſickneſs or ſorrow, by accidents or age, riches take the wings of the morning, and fly away from their poſſeſſors: The greateſt perſons in life, cannot carry their pomp and grandeur with them to the grave. Having now ſhewn the fickleneſs, and periſhableneſs of ſublunary things, and that nothing is to be relied on, but the favour and love of God. Let us not ſquander away our time, for we have none to ſpare, (*) ſince it is God's property

(*) Whatever licentious men may vainly ſuppoſe, or fooliſhly buoy themſelves up with, without purity of heart, and holineſs of life, no man ſhall ſee the Lord. God will not admit of thoſe frivolous excuſes, which ſome perſons of literature, and a learned education may plead in behalf of themſelves, for neglecting the weighty matters of the law. It is not replying, Lord I have reſtored many corrupt paſſages, in the ancient claſſicks, and illuſtrated many which were before obſcure. I have cleared up many intricacies in cronology, or geography. I have ſolved and refined many perplexed caſes in aſtronomy and antiquity, and left behind me many ſheets on thoſe various and difficult ſubjects, where the figures and characters, are ranged in due proportion, and with the greateſt exactneſs and due regard to truth. Theſe replys will not be recieved by him, who loves truth in the inward parts, however they may pleaſe curious minds that thurſt for them, or ambitious minds which ſeek for the applauſe of men, it is to be feared greatly, that ſuch will have reaſon to lament, to pour out their ſouls before the Lord in floods of penitential tears, and the ſorrows of a broken and contrite heart.

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lone, to be happy in himſelf, the ſtreams muſt be derived from him, or we muſt live in a barren and dry land, where no water is, to relieve thoſe ſouls, that are ſeeking after God, and the righteouſneſs of his kingdom. Now unto him that is able to do exeedingly above all that we aſk, or think according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in Chriſt Jeſus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.

I ſhall cloſe theſe meditations, with an excellent collect or two of our church.

A Prayer for Purity of Heart, and Holineſs of Life and manners.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all deſires known, and from whom no ſecrets are hid, cleanſe the thoughts of our hearts, by the inſpiration of thy holy ſpirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, Amen.

A Prayer for the Divine Aſſiſtance.

Almighty God, give us grace that we may caſt away the works of darkneſs, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son, Jeſus Chriſt came to viſit us, in great humility, that in the laſt day, when he ſhall come again in his glorious majeſty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may riſe to the life immortal, through him, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghoſt, now and ever, Amen.

O Almighty God, the father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the God of all mercy and conſolation, I with the profoundeſt reverence, and humble confidence, meekly approach thy awful throne, for grace, mercy, pardon and ſalva-

tion: O my God, I am a grevious and ſorrowful ſinner, whom thou art juſtly diſpleaſed with; but as thou art a merciful God, and not willing that any ſhould periſh, be pleaſed to blot out my tranſgreſſions, and heal my diſeaſed ſoul, that I may not ſin againſt thee. Lord open thou mine eyes, that I may ſee mine own infirmities, and conſtantly watch againſt them, and endeavour to correct and amend them, and all thoſe reproachful vices, which I am too apt to run into. Give me a perfect underſtanding of myſelf, and of the way of godlineſs, that I may delight in it, and keep in the practice of it, all the days of my pilgrimage. Make me diligent and chearful in my vocation, charitable and beneficial to my fellow creatures, and all that profeſs the name of Jeſus; give me a chaſte and temporate body, a purified and humble mind, that both may be preſerved unblamable, to the ſecond coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt.

A Prayer for the Morning.

Bleſſed and for ever bleſſed be thy ſacred name, O God, who hath preſerved me this night from all the evils and dangers of it, and the violent hands of cruel men, and fearful effects of my depraved nature, and my own deceitful heart; and haſt made the outgoings of the morning and evening to praiſe thee. Let thy careful providence watch over me this day, and all the days of my life, that I may not ſin againſt thee, in thought, word, or deed, but keep me holy and harmleſs, that when my ſhort and uncertain abode is ended, and the ſhadow is departed, I may die in filial fear, and reſt with an holy hope, and at laſt, attain to a joyful reſurrection, thro' the merits and death of our bleſſed Saviour, in whoſe holy name and words, I ſum up theſe my imperfect petitions, and ſay, as he taught me, Our Father, &c.

A Prayer for the Evening.

O eternal God, the father of men and angels, by whose care and good providence I am preserved and comforted, I humbly intreat thee, to forgive the sins and follies of this day, the imperfections of my services, the rashness of my words, the vanity and weakness of all my actions. How long, O Lord, shall I confess my sins, and earnestly pray against them, and yet fall under their deceivable and treacherous allurements: O let me never return to those temptations, which bring sorrow and death, and misery infinitely worse than death. Give me an utter abhorrance of all iniquity, and a love to thee above all carnal desires, and the most refined earthly amusements. Be graciously pleased, O Lord, to preserve me this night, from all evil thoughts, from the malice of wicked spirits, and the suggestions of the incendaries of darkness, so that whether I sleep or wake, be thou, O Lord, first and last in all my thoughts, and the guider and director of all my words and actions; forgive me all my numberless offences, and sanctify my spirit throughout, that when I cease from sin and sorrow, I may eternally rest in the bosom of Jesus, and behold the face of God in glory, and sing his praises, and the song of the Lamb, and that for evermore, Amen.

A Prayer against Pride.

O great and glorious God, thou art exalted far above all heavens, and thy kingdom is established in righteousness, and thy wisdom is the sure foundation of government; I adore thy majesty, and rejoice in thy mercy, and revere thy power, and I confess all dignity and honour belongeth unto thee alone, and theirs to whom thou shalt impart any ray or beam of heavenly majesty. But as for me,

me, I am a worm and no man, vile duſt and aſhes, the ſon of corruption, and the heir of rottenneſs, a lump of ignorance and folly, of ſhame and death. But what art thou, O Lord, the great God of heaven and earth, the ſource of holineſs, and infinite imperfection. But ſo ignorant am I, that I know not what to aſk, and ſo ſinful, that I am encompaſſed with ſhame and grief, and yet, O my God, I am apt to glory in my ſin, and boaſt of my infirmities, my underſtanding is too confident, my affections rebellious, my will diſobedient, and yet, I know thou reſiſteth the proud, and didſt caſt the angels down from heaven in chains of darkneſs, when they grew giddy and imperious, walking upon the walls of the celeſtial city, and beholding the glorious regions that were above them, Amen.

A Prayer againſt Impurity.

O eternal ſpotleſs Deity, thou art brighter than the ſun, purer than the angels, and the heavens are clear in thy ſight,(*) with mercy behold thy ſervant, apt to be tempted with every object, and to be overcome by every enemy, I cannot ſtand in the day of battle, unleſs thou covereſt me with thy ſhield, and hideſt me under thy wings, I ſhall periſh in the engagement. The fiery darts of the devil are ready

(*) There is not a ſtronger motive to prayer, and the conſtant exerciſe of devotion, and all other moral and chriſtian duties, than the belief of a judgement. This will juſtify divine providence, and expound, and unriddle all the myſteries of it, when God comes to judge the world, for it is to juſtify himſelf as well as to judge men. What St. Paul ſays is moſt applicable to the laſt judgement, let God be true, and every man a liar, as it is written, that thou mighteſt be juſtified in thy ſayings, and mighteſt overcome when thou art judged. We can indeed ſay enough in general, to vindicate divine wiſdom and goodneſs, but there are ten thouſand particular caſes, which we can ſay nothing to, becauſe we know nothing of them. When all the world ſhall be ſummoned before God's tribunal, we ſhall then have a perfect hiſtory of providence, which will expound all thoſe things which are now obſcure. Then

to

to conſume me, unleſs the dew of thy grace deſcend upon me, and keep off thoſe poiſonous arrows: Be pleaſed to preſerve me ſo pure and ſpotleſs, chaſte and clean, that my body may be an holy temple, and my ſoul a ſanctuary to entertain thy divine ſpirit, the ſpirit of love and holineſs, the author of peace and all true happineſs, Amen.

A Prayer againſt Envy and Maliciouſneſs.

O moſt gracious Father, the ſource of goodneſs and of eternal charity, who haſt ſo loved mankind, that thou didſt open thy boſom and ſend thy bleſſed ſon to convey thy mercies to us, and liberally beſtow them upon us, that thou mighteſt have objects to communicate thy goodneſs, and manifeſt thy abundant kindneſs, give me grace to follow ſo glorious and benign a precedent, that

we ſhall ſee an entire chain of providence, and all the intricate turnings of infinite wiſdom, in its different forms and adminiſtrations, but ſtill within the ſphere and circle of juſtice, and goodneſs, How then ſhall we admire God, when we ſhall ſee theſe wonderful, and curious ſcenes unfolded, and obſerve the gradual and regular advances of goodneſs, in the ſeveral ages of the world, proportioned to the wants and capacities of men, 'till it come to full maturity, and perfection. What a delightful proſpect will this be to good men, how will it enlarge their knowledge, increaſe their wonder, and inflame their devotions; how will it torture and perplex bad men, and increaſe and aggravate their miſery. The divine wiſdom will never appear more glorious, than at that day, when God ſhall come to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe. What good man would not long to ſee the bleſſed day, which will perfect his ſoul with the knowledge, and love, and admiration of God, and give him ſuch clear and exalted ideas, and divine thoughts as are fit for heaven, and the immediate preſence of God, into which he is now going. What wiſeman would not under the divine benediction, reſolve to correct his evil ways, that at that day he may ſee the glory of God without terror, or aſtoniſhment, with all theſe raptures and extacies, with which, ſuch new, and bright appearances of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, will fill the ſoul. This is great encouragement to the practice of both publick, and private virtues, that we ſhall be openly rewarded and finally applauded for them.

I may

I may never envy the prosperity of any one, but rejoice to honour him whom thou delightest to honour, and to love himw hom thou lovest; to commend the virtuous, to discern the precious from the vile, giving honour to whom honour is due; that I may watch the celestial port, in the way of peace and serenity, and rejoice in the good of others, Amen.

A Prayer against Intemperance and Abuse of divine Mercies.

Almighty Father the Creator of men and angels, who hast, of thy bounty, provided plentifully for all mankind, to relieve their necessities, and recreate their labours, that they may praise thee, and rejoice in thy mercies, and in thy bountious liberallity; be thou gracious unto thy servants, and suffer them not by their follies to change thy bounty into sin, nor thy grace into wantonness; give us the spirit of temperance and sobriety, that we may use thy creatures to the same purposes which thou hast designed them, so as we may be enabled to serve thee, and not make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof: Let us not, as Esau, prefer meat before a blessing, but subdue our appetites to reason, and to the grace of God, that being content with what is useful and moderate, we, by receiving it thankfully, and making it to minister to our bodies, may be the instrument of our souls, and make us the servants of God, thro' the intercession and mediation of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

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FINIS.